

A. S. MAKARENKO

THE ROAD TO LIFE
(AN EPIC OF EDUCATION)

Book Two



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THE ROAD TO LIFE

(An Epic of Education)

Book Two

PART TWO

I

A JUG OF MILK

We transferred to the new colony on a fine, warm day. The leaves on the trees had not yet begun to turn, the grass was still green, as if at the height of its second youth, freshened by the first days of autumn. The new colony itself was at that time like a beauty of thirty years—lovely for itself as well as for others, happy and calm in its assured charm. The Kolomak encircled it on almost all sides, leaving a narrow passage for communication with Goncharovka. The whispering canopy of the luxuriant treetops of our park spread generously over the Kolomak. There was many a shady mysterious nook here, in which one could bathe, cultivate the society of pixies, go fishing, or, at the lowest, exchange confidences with a congenial spirit. Our principal buildings were ranged along the top of the steep bank, and the ingenious and shameless younger boys could jump right out of the windows into the river, leaving their scanty garments on the window sills.

The slope on which the old orchard grew was terraced, and the lowest terrace of all was taken over by Sherre from the very start. It was always airy and sunny here, and the Kolomak, if not particularly adapted to mermaids, fishing, or poetry, flowed broad and calm. Instead of poetry, cabbage and black currants flourished here. The members of the colony went to this plot with strictly practical intentions, armed with spade or hoe, and sometimes a few of the boys accompanied Falcon or Bandit, harnessed to a plough and picking his way with difficulty. Here also was situated our jetty—three planks jutting out over the waves of the Kolomak to a distance of three metres from the bank.

Still further, the Kolomak, curving eastward, generously left at our feet several hectares of lush meadowland, dotted with bushes and copses. We could descend to this meadow straight from our new orchard, and in hours of

leisure there was a keen temptation to go and sit on this green slope in the shade of the poplars at the edge of the orchard, for yet another look at meadow, woods, and sky, at the silhouette of Goncharovka etched on the horizon. Kalina Ivanovich was very fond of this place, and sometimes, at noon, on a Sunday, would get me to go there with him.

I liked talking to Kalina Ivanovich about the peasants and the repairs, about life's inequities, and our own future. Before us lay the meadow, and this circumstance sometimes distracted him from his highly philosophical meanderings.

"You see, old man, life is like a woman—you can't expect justice from either. Anyone with a fine moustache will get any amount of pies and cheesecakes and fritters, and then another comes along, whose beard simply won't grow, let alone a moustache, and the wench won't even give him as much as a draught of water. Now, when I was a hussar.... Oh, you son-of-a-bitch, where's your head? Have you eaten it for supper, or did you leave it at home? Look where you've taken the horse, you parasite! Curse you! There's cabbage planted there!"

Kalina Ivanovich finished up these utterances on his feet, quite a distance from me, brandishing his pipe.

Three hundred metres away, a chestnut-coloured rump could be seen among the grass, but there was no "son-of-a-bitch" in sight. Kalina Ivanovich knew whom he was addressing, though. The meadow was Bratchenko's domain, he was constantly there, unseen, and Kalina Ivanovich's speech was in reality a sort of incantation. After two or three more brief incantations, Bratchenko himself materialized, in keeping with the magical atmosphere, not next to the horse, but just behind us, emerging from the orchard.

"What are you raving about, Kalina Ivanovich? Where's the cabbage, and where's the horse?"

A highly specialized argument ensued, from which, however, it would have been apparent even to the uninitiated that Kalina Ivanovich was quite out-of-date in his views, that he could hardly follow the topography of the colony any more, and had actually forgotten where the field had been cleared to plant cabbages.

The boys allowed Kalina Ivanovich to age in peace. Agricultural affairs had long ago passed exclusively into the hands of Sherre, and Kalina Ivanovich only now and then, by way of meticulous criticism, endeavoured to thrust his old nose into certain chinks in the agricultural armour. Sherre had a way, cool, courteous and jocose, of pinching this nose, and Kalina Ivanovich always beat his retreat.

In our general economy, however, Kalina Ivanovich approached more and more nearly the position of a king, who reigned, but did not rule. We all recognized his economic majesty and bowed respectfully to his axioms, but we did as we ourselves thought fit. Kalina Ivanovich was not even offended, for he was not a touchy individual, and besides, what he really cared about was philosophizing.

According to long-established tradition, it was Kalina Ivanovich who drove into town, and his journeys were now accompanied by a certain amount of ceremony. He had ever been an advocate of old-fashioned luxury, and the boys were familiar with his utterance:

“Gentlemen keep a grand carriage and a hungry nag, but the good master has a plain cart and a well-fed horse.”

The boys would spread fresh hay covered with a clean strip of hand-woven linen on the bottom of the old, hearse-like cart. Then they would harness the best of the horses, and drive up in style to Kalina Ivanovich's porch. All our economic officials and authorities would be doing their jobs—in the pocket of Denis Kudlaty, our assistant manager of supplies, lay a list of all that had to be done in town; Alyoshka Volkov, storekeeper, pushed the necessary boxes, tubs, balls of string, and other necessities for packing, under the hay. Kalina Ivanovich would keep the cart waiting three or four minutes at his porch, and then emerge in a clean, well-pressed raincoat, put a match to his previously prepared pipe, cast a rapid glance at the horse and cart, sometimes muttering through his teeth huffily:

“How many times do I have to tell you not to go into town in such a disreputable cap! What a stupid lot!”

While Denis changes caps with one of his comrades,

Kalina Ivanovich clambers up into his seat, and gives his order:

"Let's be off, then!"

In the town Kalina Ivanovich spends most of his time in the office of some food supply bigwig, holding his head upright, and endeavouring to keep up the honour of that strong and wealthy power, the Gorky Colony. To this end, his talk is chiefly of matters of high political importance.

"The muzhiks have all they want," he would declare. "I can tell you that for a fact."

In the meanwhile Denis Kudlaty, in his borrowed cap, would swim and dive in the economic ocean on the floor below, writing out orders, quarrelling with managers and clerks, loading the cart with sacks and bags, taking care to leave Kalina Ivanovich's place inviolate in the process, feeding the horse, and would burst into the office at three o'clock, covered with flour and sawdust.

"Time to go, Kalina Ivanovich!"

A diplomatic smile would light up Kalina Ivanovich's countenance, he would press the director's hand, and ask Denis in a businesslike manner:

"Have you loaded everything properly?"

On arriving at the colony again, the exhausted Kalina Ivanovich would rest, while Denis, hastily swallowing his lukewarm dinner, would journey to-and-fro along the economic channels of the colony, fussing about like an old woman.

Kudlaty was physically unable to bear the sight of waste—he really suffered if straw was scattered from a cart, if anyone lost a padlock, if a cowshed door hung by one hinge. Though sparing of his smiles, he never seemed cross, and the insistence with which he hunted down anyone wasting economic values was never mere nagging, such was the persuasive solidity and restrained will in his voice. He knew how to deal with careless little chaps who believed, in their innocence, that climbing a tree was the most reasonable expenditure of human energy. Denis could make them come down by a mere movement of his brows.

"Do you think with your head—or what? It'll be time for you to be married soon, and there you are, perched

up in a willow, spoiling your trousers. Come along with me, I'll give you another pair of trousers."

"What trousers?" the little chap would ask, breaking out into a cold sweat.

"Kind of overalls for climbing trees. Who ever saw a person climbing trees in new trousers? Have *you* ever seen such a person?"

Denis was deeply imbued with the economic spirit and therefore incapable of reacting to human feeling. He could not understand the simple manifestation of human psychology—the little chap had climbed a tree from the very ecstasy inspired by the new trousers he had been given. The trousers and the tree were causally associated, whereas to Denis they were completely incompatible.

Kudlaty's austere policy was, however, a necessity, for our poverty demanded the fiercest economy. Kudlaty was therefore invariably nominated assistant supply manager by the Commanders' Council, and the latter resolutely brushed aside the unmanly complaints of the younger boys as to "unfair" reprisals in regard to trousers. Karabanov, Belukhin, Vershnev, Burun, and other veterans highly appreciated Kudlaty's energy, and submitted without a murmur to the order issued by Kudlaty at a general meeting in the spring:

"Boots to be returned to the storeroom tomorrow, we can go barefoot in the summer."

Denis worked hard in October 1923. The ten detachments of the colony could hardly be got into those buildings which had been put into full repair. In the old mansion, which we called the White House, were the dormitories and classrooms, and in the big hall, which did duty as a verandah, was the carpenters' shop. The dining room was relegated to the basement of the second house, in which were the apartments of the staff. It could not seat more than thirty persons at a time, and so we had to dine in three shifts. The cobblers', wheelwrights' and tailors' shops were huddled into corners quite unlike the halls of industry. No one in the colony had enough space—neither pupils nor staff. And a perpetual reminder of potential prosperity was the two-storey empire-style building in the new orchard, tantalizing us with the spaciousness of its lofty chambers, its ornate plastered ceilings,

and the wide, open verandah overlooking the orchard. We had only to put in floors, windows, doors, staircases and stoves, to have splendid dormitories for a hundred and twenty persons, thus freeing other premises for all sorts of pedagogical requirements. But we lacked the six thousand rubles this would have required, and our whole income went on the struggle against the clinging remains of our former poverty, the return to which would have been intolerable for us all. On this front our attack had put an end to the padded jackets, the tattered caps, the camp beds, the wadded quilts handed down from the era of the last Romanov, and the rags for winding around feet. We already had a hairdresser visiting us twice a month, and though he charged ten kopeks for cropping with clippers, and twenty kopeks for a regular haircut, we were able to indulge in the luxury of various styles of haircut. Our furniture, it is true, was still unpainted, we still used wooden soup spoons, and our underclothes were patched, but this was because we converted the greater part of our income into inventory, tools, and other forms of fixed capital.

We did not possess the necessary six thousand rubles, and had no prospect of obtaining it. This sum was continually being brought up—at general meetings, at the Commanders' Council, in Komsomol speeches, or simply in the talk of our seniors and the twittering of the little ones—and in every case it was conceived of as utterly unattainable in its vastness.

At that time the Gorky Colony was under the authority of the People's Commissariat for Education, from which it received small subsidies according to estimates given. The size of these subsidies may be judged from the fact that twenty-eight rubles per head was annually allotted for clothing. Kalina Ivanovich was indignant.

"Who's the clever chap that assigns such a sum? If only I could have a look at his face, just to know what it's like! I've lived three score years, you know, and I've never seen anyone like that in the flesh—the parasites!"

I also had never seen such people, though I was often at the People's Commissariat for Education. These figures were not drawn up by a live organizer, but obtained

as the result of dividing the sum assigned for waifs and strays in the whole country by their number.

And so, for lack of funds, the Red House, as we familiarly called the empire-style building on the Trepke estate, was swept and garnished as for a ball, but the ball itself was postponed indefinitely. Not even the first dancers—the carpenters—had been invited.

Despite this melancholy state of affairs, however, the colonists were far from low-spirited. Karabanov attributed this last circumstance to our belief in diabolical forces:

“The devil will help us, you’ll see! We’re always lucky—we’re love children . . . you’ll see, if not the devil himself, some other evil spirits will come to our aid—a witch, or something. . . . I simply can’t believe that this house will always be an eyesore to us!”

And so a telegram informing us that on the 6th of October we were to be visited by Bokova, an inspector from the Ukrainian Children’s Aid, and that we must send a conveyance for her to meet the Kharkov train was considered extremely important news in leading colony circles, and ideas of immediate application to the repairing of the Red House were expressed by many.

“The old woman could get six thousand rubles for us. . . .”

“How d’you know she’s old?”

“It’s always old women in the Children’s Aid.”

Kalina Ivanovich was doubtful.

“You won’t get anything from the Children’s Aid. I know that very well. She’ll ask you if you can’t take three boys more. And then, you know, women—equal rights for women in theory, but in reality once a woman, always a woman. . . .”

On the fifth, in the domain of Anton Bratchenko, the two-horse phaeton was washed, and the manes of Red and Mary plaited. Guests from the capital were a rarity in the colony, and Anton was inclined to regard them with profound respect. On the morning of the 6th of October I went to the station, with Bratchenko himself in the driver’s seat.

Seated in the carriage, in the station yard, Anton and I examined with an attentive eye all the old women coming out of the station, to see if there was one among

them who looked as if she came from the Department of Public Education. Suddenly we heard an inquiry from a person who did not seem to be in our line at all.

"Where is this carriage from?"

"We're here on our own business! There are cabs over there," said Anton a trifle gruffly, through his teeth.

"Aren't you from the Gorky Colony?"

Lifting his feet, Anton described a complete circle around his own axis. I, too, was interested.

Before us stood a most astonishing figure—a light-grey coat of checked material, and beneath it a pair of silk-clad legs. The face was smooth and rosy, with the most wondrous dimples in the cheeks; the eyes sparkled, the brows were finely marked. From beneath a lacy scarf peeped out dazzling blonde ringlets. At her back was a porter holding the lightest of luggage—a handbox and a travelling bag of fine leather.

"Are you Comrade Bokova?"

"You see! I guessed at once you were from the Gorky Colony!"

Anton pulled himself together, shook his head gravely, and carefully gathered up the reins. Bokova skipped lightly into the carriage, from which the smell of trains and station was driven by quite another smell—fragrant and fresh. I retreated into the corner of the seat, greatly embarrassed by this unusual presence.

The whole way Comrade Bokova chattered on the most varied subjects. She had heard a great deal about the Gorky Colony and was simply longing to see what it was like.

"You know, Comrade Makarenko, we have such difficulties—*such* difficulties!—with these boys. I'm terribly sorry for them, and I should so love to help them somehow. Is this one of your boys? Awfully sweet boy! Aren't you bored here? You know it's awfully boring in these children's homes! We hear such a lot of talk about you. But they say you don't like us."

"Don't like whom?"

"Us—the Social Education Ladies."

"I don't understand."

"They say that's what you call us—Ladies' Social Education."

"That's news!" I said. "I never called anyone that in my life . . . but . . . it's not bad, really!"

I laughed heartily. Bokova was delighted with the apt designation.

"You know, there's something in it—there are lots of ladies in Social Education. I'm one of them myself. You won't hear anything—er—learned from me. Are you glad?"

Anton kept glancing back from the box, gravely staring from his great eyes at the unusual passenger.

"He keeps looking at me!" laughed Bokova. "Why does he look at me like that?"

Anton reddened and, urging the horses forward, muttered something.

When we arrived we were met by the members of the colony and Kalina Ivanovich—all deeply interested. Semyon Karabanov scratched his head, a gesture which betrayed his embarrassment. Zadorov screwed up one eye and smiled.

I introduced Bokova to the boys, who politely took her to show her the colony. Kalina Ivanovich tugged at my sleeve, asking:

"How are we to feed her?"

"I don't know how they're fed," I replied, mimicking his tone.

"I suppose what she needs is plenty of milk. What d'you think, eh?"

"No, Kalina Ivanovich," I said. "She'll need something a little more solid than that."

"What am I to give her? Perhaps we should slaughter a pig? Eduard Nikolayevich'll never let us."

Kalina Ivanovich went off to see to the feeding of our distinguished visitor, and I hastened after Bokova. She was already on friendly terms with the boys and I heard her say:

"Call me Maria Kondratyevna."

"Maria Kondratyevna! That's fine! Well then, look here, Maria Kondratyevna—this is our hothouse. We made it ourselves. I put in a lot of digging there. Look, my hands are still blistered."

Karabanov displayed a hand like a spade to Maria Kondratyevna.

"Don't you believe him, Maria Kondratyevna! He got those blisters rowing."

Maria Kondratyevna kept turning her fair beautiful head, now freed from the scarf, in the most lively manner, but it was obvious that she felt very little interest in the hothouse and our other achievements.

She was shown the Red House, too.

"Why don't you finish it?" asked Bokova.

"Six thousand rubles," said Zadorov.

"And you haven't any money? Poor things!"

"Have you got it?" Semyon growled out. "Why, then—d'you know what—let's sit down here on the grass!"

Maria Kondratyevna let herself down gracefully on to the grass right in front of the Red House. The boys described to her in vivid colours our crowded way of life, and the luxurious forms our future would take, if the Red House could be restored.

"You see, we have eighty members now, and then we'd have a hundred and twenty. You see?"

Kalina Ivanovich approached from the orchard, Olya Voronova following him with an enormous jug, two earthenware mugs, and half a loaf of rye bread. Maria Kondratyevna gasped:

"How lovely!" she exclaimed. "How nice everything is here! Who's that darling old man? He's a beekeeper, isn't he?"

"No, I'm not a beekeeper," said Kalina Ivanovich, beaming. "And I've never been one, but I tell you this milk is sweeter than honey. It's not the work of some wench, but that of the Gorky Colony. You've never tasted such milk in your life—so cold, so sweet." Maria Kondratyevna clapped her hands and bent over the mug, into which Kalina Ivanovich poured milk as if performing a sacred rite. Zadorov hastened to make the most of this interesting incident.

"You have six thousand rubles lying idle, and we can't repair our house. That's not fair, you know."

Maria Kondratyevna gasped from the cold milk, whispering ecstatically:

"What milk! Never in my life.... It's sheer bliss!"

"And what about the six thousand rubles?" said Zadorov, smiling impudently into her face.

"What a materialist that boy is!" said Maria Kondratyevna, blinking. "You want six thousand rubles—and what do I get for it?"

Zadorov looked round helplessly, and threw out his hands, ready to offer all his wealth in exchange for six thousand rubles. Karabanov wasted no time on thought.

"We can give you as much of that sort of bliss as you like."

"Bliss—what bliss?" asked Maria Kondratyevna, all aglow with colour.

"Cold milk."

Maria Kondratyevna fell on her face on the grass and laughed till she cried.

"Oh, no—you don't get round me with your milk!" she cried. "I'll get you six thousand rubles, but you'll have to take forty children from me—sweet lads, only just now they're a bit, you know, grimy."

The colonists fell serious. Olya Voronova, swinging the jug like a pendulum, looked into Maria Kondratyevna's eyes.

"Why not?" she said. "We'll take forty children."

"Take me where I can have a wash, I need a nap. I'll get you six thousand rubles."

"You haven't seen our fields yet."

"We'll go to the fields tomorrow. All right?"

Maria Kondratyevna stayed three days with us. By the evening of the very first day she knew the names of many of the members of the colony, chattering with them on a bench in the old orchard late into the night. They rowed her in a boat, they swung her on the giant's stride and on the swings, but she had no time to inspect the fields, and could scarcely find time to sign an agreement with me. Under this agreement the Ukrainian Children's Aid undertook to send us six thousand rubles for the repairing of the Red House, and we undertook, on the conclusion of these repairs, to receive forty homeless children from the Ukrainian Children's Aid.

Maria Kondratyevna was enthusiastic about the colony.

"It's a paradise!" she exclaimed. "You have the most splendid—what shall I call them?"

"Angels?"

"No—not angels! People!"

I did not see Maria Kondratyevna off. Bratchenko did not take the driver's seat, and the horses' manes were not plaited. Karabanov, to whose hands Bratchenko entrusted the turnout, sat on the box. His black eyes sparkled, and he seemed to be brimming over with diabolical smiles, which he scattered all over the yard.

"Has the agreement been signed, Anton Semyonovich?" he asked me in undertones.

"Yes," I replied.

"All right, then. I'll show that beauty a ride!"

Zadorov pressed Maria Kondratyevna's hand.

"Mind you come in the summer," he said. "You promised, you know."

"I will, I will! I'll take a *dacha** here."

"Why a *dacha*? You can come to us."

Maria Kondratyevna bowed all round, bestowing a kind, smiling glance upon all of us.

On his return from the station, Karabanov, unharnessing the horses, seemed worried, and Zadorov listened to him in a worried way, too. I went up to them.

"I told you a witch would help us," said Zadorov, "and that's how it did turn out."

"Maria Kondratyevna isn't a witch!"

"You think all witches are on broomsticks, and have hooked noses! Oh, no! Real witches are beautiful."

2

OTCHENASH

Bokova did not let us down—we received a money order for six thousand rubles in a week's time, and Kalina Ivanovich went groaning all over the place in a paroxysm of building fever. The fourth detachment under Taranets, which had received orders for making good window frames and doors out of unseasoned wood, was groaning, too. Kalina Ivanovich abused some person unknown:

"May they make him a coffin of unseasoned wood when he dies, the parasite!"

* Suburban or country house.—*Tr.*

The last act of our four-year struggle with the Trepke ruins had begun. We were all, from Kalina Ivanovich to Shurka Zhevely, seized with the desire to finish the house as quickly as possible. We had to attain, without delay, the goal of which we had so long and consistently dreamed. The lime pits, the tangled weeds, the crooked paths in the park, the rubble and builders' trash all over the yard, were getting on our nerves. And there were only eighty of us. The Sunday Commanders' Councils patiently wrung out of Sherre two or three mixed detachments for the putting in order of our territory. They often got quite cross with Sherre.

"Upon my word, it's going too far! We have no say in anything—it's all cut and dried."

Sherre calmly produced his crumpled notebook, asserting quietly that, on the contrary, everything was behind-hand, that there were oceans of work to be done, and that if he gave up two detachments for work in the yard, it was simply because he, too, fully appreciated the necessity of such work, otherwise he would never have given the detachments, but would have set them to sorting seeds, or repairing forcing frames.

The commanders muttered discontentedly, with difficulty finding room in their minds for two conflicting emotions—anger with Sherre for his inflexibility, and admiration for the firm stand he took.

At this time Sherre was just finishing the organization of the six-crop rotation system. All of a sudden everyone seemed to notice how our agricultural undertakings had developed. Some of our colonists were devoted to agriculture, as to their own future, and conspicuous among these was Olya Voronova. But the enthusiasm for the land of Karabanov, Volokhov, Burun and Osadchy was of an almost purely aesthetic nature. Having, without the slightest thought of personal advantage, fallen in love with farm work, they had gone in for it without a backward glance, connecting it neither with their own future, nor with any of their other tastes. They simply lived and enjoyed life, enjoying each day of intensive work, and looking forward to the morrow as to a holiday. They were confident that all these days were leading them to new and brilliant successes, but what these would be

they did not trouble to think. They were all preparing for the *Rabfak*, but here, also, without any definite aspirations—they did not even know which *Rabfak* they wanted to enter.

Others there were in the colony who, while fond of farming, took up a more practical stand. Like Oprishko and Fedorenko, these had no desire to study in our school, and, altogether, laid no special claims upon life, considering with good-humoured modesty that to cultivate the land, to get themselves a good hut, a horse, and a wife, to work in the summer from sunup to sundown, to gather up everything in the autumn, and put it safely away, to settle down quietly in the winter to the enjoyment of fritters and borshch, cheesecakes and lard, to attend, about twice a month, weddings, saints' days, betrothals or birthday gatherings, was a splendid future for a man.

The case of Olya Voronova was quite different. She cast the thoughtful, anxious glance of a Komsomol on our own and our neighbours' fields; for her, the fields suggested problems, as well as fritters.

Our sixty desyatins of land, on which Sherre worked so hard, did not deter him and his pupils from dreaming of big-scale farming, with a tractor, and furrows a kilometre long. Sherre knew how to interest the members of the colony in this subject, and he had a group of permanent listeners. As well as our own people, Pavel Pavlovich, and Spiridon, the secretary of the Goncharovka Komsomol organization, were constant members of this group.

Pavel Pavlovich Nikolayenko, although already twenty-six years old, was not married and according to village standards an old bachelor. His father, old Nikolayenko, had become a substantial kulak under our very eyes, furtively exploiting boy tramps as farm hands, and at the same time posing as an out-and-out poor peasant.

It may have been on this account that Pavel Pavlovich disliked the paternal hearth, and spent most of his time at the colony, where Sherre employed him for the execution of the more responsible work with the cultivators, and where he had almost the status of an instructor in the eyes

of our boys. Pavel Pavlovich was well-read, and could listen intelligently and attentively when Sherre spoke.

Both Pavel Pavlovich and Spiridon were apt to turn the conversation towards peasant themes—they could only think of big-scale farming in terms of peasant holdings. Olya Voronova would gaze steadily at them, her brown eyes becoming warm with sympathy when Pavel Pavlovich said quietly:

"I look at it this way—all around people are working, working, but not the right way. And if they are to work the right way, they must be taught. And who's to teach them? The muzhik? To hell with him—it's hard enough to teach *him*! Eduard Nikolayevich here, he has reckoned everything up, and told us what to do. That's right! That's the way to work! But those devils will never work like that! They want to work their own way."

"But the colonists work," cautiously interpolated Spiridon, a man with a wide, clever mouth.

"The colonists," smiled Pavel Pavlovich wistfully. "That's something quite different, you know."

Olya smiled, too, joined her hands with interlaced fingers, as if to crack a nut, and darted a mischievous glance at the top of the poplars. Olya's golden plaits tumbled over her shoulders, followed by the grave grey eyes of Pavel Pavlovich.

"The colony folk don't intend to go in for farming, and yet they work, and the peasants spend their whole life on the land, they have children, and all that...."

"Well, and what about it?" said Spiridon, not getting her point.

"Don't you see?" said Olya in a voice of surprise. "The peasants ought to work still better in a commune."

"What makes you think so?" asked Pavel Pavlovich gently.

Olya looked severely into the eyes of Pavel Pavlovich, and he forgot her plaits for a moment, aware of nothing but this severe, almost unfeminine gaze.

"They ought to!" said Olya. "You know what 'ought to' means, don't you? It's as plain as two and two is four."

Karabanov and Burun listened to this conversation. It had merely theoretical interest for them, like all talk about

the "muzhiks," from whom they had dissociated themselves forever. But the tenseness of the moment entertained Karabanov and he could not refrain from taking part in the verbal gymnastics.

"Olya's right," he said. "'Ought to' means they must be taken in hand and compelled. . . ."

"And how are you going to compel them?" asked Pavel Pavlovich.

"Somehow or other," said Semyon, warming up to the subject. "How does one compel people? By force! Just you hand all your muzhiks to me, and in a week they'll be working like lambs, and in two weeks they'll be thanking me."

Pavel Pavlovich screwed up his eyes.

"And what's your force? A sock in the jaw?"

Semyon flopped down on to the bench laughing, and Burun explained, restrained contempt in his voice:

"Sock in the jaw—nuts! The real force is a revolver."

Olya turned her face slowly towards him, instructing him patiently:

"It's *you* who don't understand. If people *ought* to do a thing, they'll do it without a revolver. They'll do it of their own free will. You only have to tell them properly, explain."

Semyon lifted his head from the bench, his eyeballs distended with astonishment.

"Olya, Olya!" he cried. "You're in a regular muddle! 'Explain!' D'you hear that, Burun? Ha! What's the good of explaining, if a chap *wants* to be a kulak?"

"Who wants to be a kulak?" asked Olya indignantly, opening her eyes wide.

"Who? They all do! Every last one of them. Spiridon, Pavel Pavlovich, all of them!"

Pavel Pavlovich smiled. Spiridon was overwhelmed by the unexpected attack and could only say: "Just fancy!"

"Fancy!" repeated Karabanov. "He's only a Komsomol because he hasn't any land. Just you give him all in one go twenty desyatins, a cow, a sheep, and a good horse,—and there you are! Next thing, he'll be driving *you*, Olya!"

Burun laughed and backed him up, with an air of authority:

"He will, and Pavlo will, too!"

"To hell with you, you bastards!" cried Spiridon, suddenly stung—he reddened and clenched his fists.

Semyon walked around the garden bench, lifting each leg high before he put it down, as an expression of his extreme delight. It was hard to make out if he was in earnest, or just teasing the rustics.

In front of the bench on the grass sat Silanti Semyonovich Otchenash. He had a barrel-shaped head, a red face, a clipped, colourless moustache, and a perfectly bald skull. One seldom comes across people like that now, but lots of them used to rove up and down Russia—philosophers conversant both with the rights of humanity and the taste of vodka.

"It's true, what Semyon says," he said. "The muzhik—he doesn't understand fellowship, as they say. If he has a horse, he wants to have a foal as well—so that there'll be two horses, and that's all he cares. You see how it is!"

Otchenash gesticulated with a gnarled thumb extended from his clenched fist, and narrowed his white-lashed eyes wisely.

"So it means that horses rule men, does it?" Spiridon asked angrily.

"That's just it—it's the horses who rule, that's what it is. Horses, and cows, you know! And if he has nothing, he's good for nothing but guarding the melon beds. You see how it is!"

Everyone in our commune liked Silanti. Olya Voronova was fond of him, too. And now she bent over him affectionately, while he turned his broadly smiling face towards her, as to a sun.

"What is it, my beauty?"

"You're old-fashioned, Silanti, old-fashioned. And all around is the new."

No one had any idea where Silanti Semyonovich Otchenash came from. He had simply emerged from the cosmos, trammelled neither by conventions nor property. He wore a coarse linen blouse, and ancient ragged trousers pulled on over his bare legs. He did not so much as carry a staff. This free individual had a special charm for the colonists, and they dragged him into my office with the utmost enthusiasm.

"Anton Semyonovich—look who's come to us!"

Silanti looked at me with interest, and smiled back at the little boys like an old friend.

"And is this your what's-his-name—your chief?"

I, also, took an immediate fancy to him.

"Have you come to us on business?" I asked.

Silanti rearranged his features, to make them look at once businesslike and inspiring of confidence.

"It's like this, you see," he said. "I'm a worker myself, and you have work and that's all there is to it."

"What can you do?"

"Well, as they say, where there's no money, a man learns to do anything."

He suddenly burst out into frank, merry laughter. The boys laughed with him, and I laughed, too. And it was clear to all that the only thing to do was to laugh.

"And can you do all sorts of work?"

"Well, almost anything... it's like this, you see—" declared Silanti, by now slightly confused.

"But what exactly?"

"I can plough, and I can harrow," began Silanti, checking off his accomplishments on bent fingers, "and then, I can look after horses, and all sorts of livestock, and do—er—what d'you call it—odd jobs of all sort—carpentry and work in the smithy, and stovemaking. And I'm a housepainter, you know, and I can mend boots. If there's a hut to be built, I can do that, too, and I can slaughter a boar. The only thing I can't do is stand godfather—it's never come my way."

He suddenly burst out laughing, so amused that he had to wipe tears from his eyes.

"Never came your way? You don't mean it!"

"Nobody ever asked me, you see—that's what it is!"

The boys laughed wholeheartedly, and Toska Solovyov fairly squealed, reaching on tiptoe towards Silanti.

"Why didn't anyone ever ask you? Why didn't they ask you?"

Silanti became serious, and, like a good teacher, began to explain to Toska:

"It's like this, you see, brother," he said. "Whenever there's a christening on foot I think to myself—they'll ask me! And then somebody richer is found, and there you are!"

"Have you got any papers?" I asked him.

"I did have a paper, quite a short time ago I had a—what's-its-name—document," he said. "But it's like this, you see—I have no pocket, and so, you see, it got lost. But what d'you want documents for, when I'm here myself—as large as life, you know, standing in front of you?"

"Where did you work before?"

"Where? In all sorts of places! For all sorts of people. Good ones, beasts, all sorts, you know! I tell you straight—I have nothing to conceal—I've worked for all sorts of people."

"Tell me the truth—have you ever gone in for stealing?"

"I'll tell you straight—I've never gone in for stealing. I haven't, and that's the truth! That's how it is, you see!"

Silanti glanced at me in embarrassment. He seemed to think that I might have preferred a different reply.

Silanti stayed to work with us. We tried setting him to work with the livestock for Sherre, but nothing came of our attempt at "organizing" him. Silanti admitted of no limitations whatever in the sphere of human activities—why was he to be allowed to do this, and forbidden to do that? Accordingly, when working for us, he did anything he deemed necessary, just when *he* deemed it necessary. He regarded all authorities with a smile, and paid no more heed to orders than he would have to speech in a foreign language. In the course of the day he managed to work in the stables, the fields, the hog-house, the farmyard, the smithy, to take part in sessions both of the Pedagogical and the Commanders' Councils. He had an extraordinary gift for discovering, through a sort of sixth sense, the most dangerous spot in the colony, and would be on that spot in a twinkling of an eye, in the role of a responsible person. While rendering nothing to authority, he was always ready to answer for his work, or to submit to abuse and revilings for mistakes and failures. In such cases he would scratch the back of his head and throw out his arms.

"We've made a mess of things," he would admit. "It's like this, you see!"

Silanti Semyonovich Otchenash threw himself into our Komsomol life from his very first day with us, and never failed to hold forth at Komsomol general meetings and at meetings of the bureau. Once he came to me full of righteous indignation.

"Look here," he exclaimed, gesticulating with his thumb, "I went to them—"

"To whom?"

"Oh, to those Komsomols, you know. And they wouldn't let me in—it's one of those, you know, closed meetings. I spoke to them nicely—'You cubs,' I said, 'if you shut me out, you'll be green to the day of your death. Born a fool—die a fool, and that's all!'"

"And then what?"

"It's like this, you see—either they don't understand, or they're drunk—but no, they're not drunk. I put it to them. 'Who are you keeping things from? If it's from Luka, or from Sofron, or Moussi, it's right. But how can you keep *me* out? Perhaps you don't, as they say, recognize me, or perhaps you've gone out of your minds.' It's like this, you see—they wouldn't even listen, just laughed, like, what d'you call it, little boys. You talk seriously to them, and they only make fun, and that's all there is to it."

Together with our Komsomol organization Silanti took part in scholastic affairs also.

The first result of the regular Komsomol regime was to set our school on its feet. Till then it had dragged out a somewhat wretched existence, incapable of overcoming the detestation of study felt by many of our members.

This was, it must be admitted, quite comprehensible. The first days of the Gorky Colony had been a time of recuperation from the bitter experiences of their homeless days. In those days modest dreams of becoming shoemakers and carpenters formed a refuge in which overstrained nerves could regain their tone.

The dazzling progress of our collective, and its triumphant fanfare on the shores of the Kolomak did much to bolster up the members of the colony in their own eyes. With very little difficulty we were able to advance in the place of modest shoemaking ideals the fair and moving symbol:

RABFAK

At that time the word *Rabfak* had quite a different significance from that which it now bears. It has become simply the title of a modest scholastic institution. Then it was a banner standing for the deliverance of working-class youth from darkness and ignorance, vivid assertion of the new right of man to knowledge. And all of us at that time regarded the *Rabfak* with what can only be described as tender emotions.

In practice this is how things worked out: by the autumn of 1923, aspirations towards the *Rabfak* had got a hold on almost all our charges. These aspirations had crept into the colony unnoticed, as far back as 1921, when our women teachers had persuaded the ill-starred Raisa to go to the *Rabfak*. Many *Rabfak* students from among the youth of the engine works used to come and see us. The colonists would listen enviously to their stories of the heroic days of the first *Rabfaks*, and this envy helped them to receive our own propaganda work for the *Rabfak* with greater warmth. We urged our charges towards school and learning with the utmost insistence, speaking of the *Rabfak* as of the most glorious path a human being could take. But entry into the *Rabfak* was associated in the eyes of the colonists with an examination of insuperable difficulty, only to be passed, according to eyewitnesses, by prodigies. We had great difficulty in convincing our pupils that it was possible to prepare for this terrible ordeal in our school, too. Many of them could have gone into a *Rabfak* by now, but were prevented from doing so by vague fears, and they decided to remain yet another year at the colony, so as to make quite sure of their preparedness. Such was the case of Burun, Karabanov, Vershnev, Zadorov. We were particularly impressed by the scholastic ardour of Burun. He hardly ever required encouragement. With silent determination he wrestled with the difficulties of arithmetic and grammar, and even with his own limitations. The merest trifles—a law of grammar, or an arithmetical problem of a certain type—required his utmost exertion, accompanied by much puffing, panting and sweating, but never by irritation or any doubt of the outcome. He was

possessed of the fortunate illusion that knowledge was a supremely difficult and braintaxing thing only to be acquired by extraordinary efforts. He failed, in some miraculous manner, to remark that others took all these difficulties in their stride, that Zadorov never expended a single moment on study beyond the ordinary school hours, that Karabanov gave himself up to dreams having no connection with his studies even during lessons, inwardly brooding over some trifle of colony life, instead of the problem or the exercise. And at last the time came when Burun was ahead of his comrades, when their brilliant flashes of knowledge appeared but a small thing in comparison with his own solid erudition. Marusya Levchenko was the exact opposite of Burun. She brought with her to the colony an intolerably quarrelsome disposition, noisy hysteria, suspiciousness, and tearfulness. We went through a lot on her account. She was capable, with a kind of drunken abandon and the sweeping impetuosity of a neurotic, to smash into smithereens in the space of a single minute the most precious things—friendship, success, a fine day, a bright, calm evening, the most cherished and the most radiant hopes. There were many cases in which it seemed that there was nothing for it but to take pails of cold water and mercilessly pour them over this intolerable creature, with her eternal, idiotic outbreaks of fire.

The steady resistance of the colony, expressed in terms far from tender, and frequently almost cruel, taught Marusya to control herself, but then she began with the same morbid obstinacy to mock at and torture herself. She had a splendid memory and was clever and extremely good-looking; there was a deep flush on her dusky cheeks, her great black eyes seemed to emit flames and lightning from beneath the disarming surprise of a calm, pure, intelligent forehead. But Marusya was convinced that she was hideous, that she was “a fright,” that she understood nothing, and never would understand anything. She attacked the simplest of tasks with preconceived resentment.

“Nothing will come of it, anyhow!” she would exclaim. “You keep on at me—study, study! Teach your Buruns! I’ll go out as a servant! What’s the good of torturing me, if I’m not good for anything?”

Natalya Markovna Osipova, a sentimental being with angelic eyes and an almost exasperatingly angelic temperament, would melt into tears after working with Marusya.

"I'm fond of her," she would say, "and I do want to teach her, but she sends me to the devil and says it's disgraceful how I pester her. What am I to do?"

I transferred Marusya to the group of Ekaterina Grigoryevna, though I myself feared the consequences of this step, for Ekaterina Grigoryevna placed simple and straightforward demands on people.

Three days after the beginning of term, Ekaterina Grigoryevna brought Marusya to me, closed the door, seated her pupil, who was trembling with rage, on a chair, and said:

"Anton Semyonovich! Here's Marusya—you decide what's to be done with her! The miller happens to need a servant. Marusya thinks she'll never be fit for anything but service. Let her go to the miller! But there's another alternative: I guarantee to prepare her for the *Rabfak* by the autumn, she's very capable."

"The *Rabfak*, of course," I said.

Marusya sat on the chair, watching Ekaterina Grigoryevna's calm face from eyes full of hatred.

"But," continued Ekaterina Grigoryevna, "I can't have her insulting me during lessons. I'm a toiler myself, and I'm not to be insulted. If she ever again uses the word 'devil,' or calls me an 'idiot,' I won't work with her."

I understood Ekaterina Grigoryevna's move; but all moves had been tried with Marusya, and my pedagogical imagination no longer burned with the least enthusiasm. I cast a weary glance at Marusya and said, without the slightest affectation:

"Nothing will come of it! She'll go on with her devils and fools and idiots. Marusya has no respect for others, and such an attitude isn't going to pass all at once...."

"I do respect others!" Marusya interrupted me.

"No, you have no respect for anyone," I said. "But what's to be done about it? She's our charge. This is the way I look at it, Ekaterina Grigoryevna: you're a grown-up, wise, experienced person, and Marusya's a bad-tempered little girl. Let's not allow ourselves to be upset by her. We'll let her have her own way—let her call

you idiot, let her even call you a beast—that's happened too, hasn't it?—and you just take no notice. It'll pass. Do you agree?"

Ekaterina Grigoryevna, smiling, looked at Marusya, and said simply:

"All right. That's the way. I agree."

Marusya's black orbs, shining with tears of mortification, were fixed steadily on me; suddenly she covered her face with her kerchief, and ran weeping from the room.

A week later I asked Ekaterina Grigoryevna: "How's Marusya doing?"

"She's all right. She holds her tongue, but she's very cross with you."

And the next day, late at night, Silanti came to me with Marusya, saying:

"I could hardly drag her to you, as they say. You see, Marusya's very hurt with you, Anton Semyonovich. You just have a talk with her."

He moved modestly to one side. Marusya let her head droop.

"I haven't got anything to say to you," she said. "If they think I'm mad, let them!"

"What are you hurt with me about?" I asked.

"I won't be thought mad!"

"But I don't think you mad."

"Why did you say that to Ekaterina Grigoryevna?"

"Oh, well, I was wrong, there. I thought you'd use all sorts of bad language to her."

Marusya smiled.

"But I don't swear at her."

"You don't? It means I was wrong. Somehow I thought you would."

Marusya's exquisite face lit up with a cautious, mistrustful joy:

"You're always like that—jumping on a person!"

Silanti stepped forward, gesticulating with his cap.

"Don't go on at a fellow! There's a whole lot of you, as they say, and only one of him. What if he did make a little mistake, you shouldn't be offended with him."

Marusya glanced gaily and quickly into Silanti's face.

"You're a blockhead, Silanti!" she said in a ringing voice. "Even if you *are* an old man!"

And she ran out of the office. Silanti waved his cap.

"That's the way it is," he said.

Suddenly he smote his knee with his cap and burst out laughing.

"So that's the way it is, damn the little brat!"

3

DOMINANTS

Hardly had the carpenters finished the windows in the Red House, when winter was upon us. That year, winter was kind: downy and mellow, with no unhealthy thaws or severe frosts. For three days Kudlaty was busy with the distribution of winter clothing to the colonists. The grooms and pig tenders he gave *valenki*,* the rest got boots, remarkable neither for newness nor style, but possessing many other virtues—solid material, elegant patches, enviable roominess, enabling two sets of legging-strips to find a place in each of them. At that time we hardly knew what a coat was, wearing instead a kind of jacket quilted with wadding, and with padded sleeves—the legacy of the world war. On some heads there appeared caps reminiscent of the tsarist military commissariat. But the majority of the boys had to wear their cotton caps in the winter, too. We were unable at that time to warm the bodies of our charges in a more efficient manner. Winter and summer their trousers and shirts were of a light cotton material. There was therefore in the movements of the boys in the winter a certain superfluous lightness, enabling them to dash from one place to another like shooting stars, even during the severest frost.

Winter evenings in the colony were full of charm. Work was over by five, and there were three hours till supper. Here and there oil lamps were lighted, but it was not this which made for true animation and cosiness. The stoves would be set going in dormitory and classroom. There were always two clusters around each stove—one of logs, the other of colonists, and both clusters seemed to be there not so much with a view to heating as for friendly evening chat. The logs began first, as the nimble

* High felt boots.—*Tr.*

hands of one of the lads laid them in the stove. They told a long story full of amusing adventures and laughter, shots, pursuit, boyish cheerfulness and triumphant jubilations. The boys could hardly make out their chatter, for the narrators interrupted one another, and all seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere or other, but the meaning of the story was clear enough, and sank deep into the heart—life is a gay and absorbing adventure. And when the crackling of the wood died down, and the narrators had settled down to ardent repose, merely whispering something with their weary tongues, the boys and girls would begin *their* stories.

In one of these groups was Vetkovsky. He was famed in the colony as a story-teller, and was always sure of a large audience.

"There are many wonderful things in the world," he would say. "We stick here and never see anything, but there are chaps in the world who never miss a thing. I met one of them lately. He'd been to the Caspian Sea and had roved about the Caucasus. There's a ravine there, and a cliff, and it's called 'God take me across!' Because there's no other way, there's only this one way, you see, past this cliff. Some people get by, and some don't—stones keep rolling down all the time. It's all right so long as one doesn't fall on your noddle, but if it does, you fall right into the abyss and nobody ever finds you."

Zadorov stood by listening attentively and looking with equal attentiveness into Vetkovsky's blue eyes.

"Why don't you go there and try, Kostya?" he would say. "Perhaps God would take you across."

The lads would turn their heads, illuminated by the red glow of the stove, towards Zadorov.

Kostya sighed his displeasure.

"You don't understand, Shurka," he said. "It would be interesting to see everything. This chap, now, was there."

With his usual irresistible, ironic smile, Zadorov would say:

"I'd ask that chap something else.... Time to close the flue, kids."

"What would you ask him?" inquired Vetkovsky pensively.

Zadorov watched the eager lad who was rattling the shutter over the flue.

"I'd ask him the multiplication table. He's a rotter, after all, travelling all over the world, sponging on people, and growing up an ignoramus—probably he can't even read. 'Take me across,' indeed! Dunces like that deserve to have their heads bashed in. That cliff was put there purposely for them!"

The boys would laugh, and someone volunteered the advice:

"Better stay with us, Kostya! *You're* no dunce!"

At another stove was Silanti, seated on the floor, his knees wide apart, his bald head gleaming, as he spun a long yarn.

"... We thought everything was all right, as they say. He was crying and kissing us, the mean guy, but the moment he got to his office, he played a dirty trick. He unleashed his hounds on the town, that's what he did. And the next morning what did we see—mounted police, and everyone was saying we were to be flogged. But my brother and I, we didn't like, as they say, having our trousers taken off, and all that. I was sorry for my girl, you see how it was! But I thought to myself: 'They won't touch the girl....'"

Behind Silanti were planted Kalina Ivanovich's *valenki*, and above them rose the smoke of Kalina Ivanovich's pipe. The smoke from his pipe descended to the stove, making a sharp angle, bifurcating in two streams around the ears of a bullet-headed little chap, and rushing eagerly into the hot draft of the stove. Winking at me, Kalina Ivanovich interrupted Silanti:

"Hee-hee! Come on, Silanti, just you tell us—did those parasites stroke you on the place your legs grow from, or did they not?"

Silanti jerked his head, and almost falling on the floor, burst out laughing.

"They did, Kalina Ivanovich, you're right there! And all for a wench, damn her!"

And the murmuring streams of narrative flowed on around the other stoves, and in the classrooms and in the apartments. Vershnev and Karabanov were sure to be in Lydochka's room, where Lydochka would treat them to

tea and jam. The tea did not prevent Vershnev from getting angry with Karabanov.

"All right!" he stammered. "You do nothing but scoff day in, day out. When are you going to start thinking?"

"Why, what is there to think about? Have you a wife, or bullocks, or are your storerooms full of goods? What have you to think about? Just live, that's all!"

"One ought to think about life, you funny chap!"

"You're a fool, Kolka, that's what you are—a fool!" cried Karabanov. "According to you, thinking means settling into an armchair, and staring in front of oneself. But anyone who has a brain will think, anyhow. It's only people like you who need to stoke themselves before they can begin to think."

"Why d'you tease Kolya?" Lydochka would say. "Let him think if he wants to—he might get at something that way."

"Who? Kolka? Not he! D'you know what Kolka is? He's a little Jesus! He's 'seeking the truth.' Have you ever seen such an idiot? He wants the truth! He'd like to grease boots with the truth."

Semyon and Kolya would leave Lydochka the best of friends, Semyon singing at the top of his voice, and Kolya, an affectionate arm around Semyon's waist, still trying to convince him.

"S-s-since there has been a r-r-revolution," he would stammer, "everything ought to be done right."

In my modest abode, also, were visitors. I now had my mother with me, an aged woman, whose life was quietly flowing into the final reaches of eventide, veiled by calm, transparent clouds. The colonists called her "Granny." And now Shurka Zhevely, Mitka Zhevely's younger brother, was visiting her. Shurka had the sharpest of noses. He had been a long time in the colony but didn't seem to grow, though certain parts of him became sharper and sharper, till he was all over points—his nose was sharp, his ears were sharp, his chin was sharp, and his glance was sharp, too.

Shurka always had some odd enterprises or other on foot. Behind a remote bush in the garden he had a boarded-up space in which dwelt a couple of rabbits, and in

the stoker's basement he kept a baby raven. At the general meeting the Komsomols would sometimes accuse Shurka of running his "farm," which they said was of a purely private nature, for the purposes of speculation. But Shurka would defend himself vigorously, and not too politely.

"Come on, then, just you prove that I've sold anything! Did you ever see me selling anything?"

"Where d'you get the money from, then?"

"What money?"

"Where did you get the money to buy sweets with yesterday?"

"Call that money? Granny gave me ten kopeks."

Nobody had anything to say against Granny at the general meeting. There were always a few little boys hanging around Granny. Sometimes they would run little errands for her in Goncharovka, but they always tried to keep out of my sight when doing so. And when it was absolutely certain that I was busy and not soon to be expected home, they would flock to Granny's table in groups of two or three, drinking tea, or finishing up some stewed fruit which Granny had made for me, but which I had not had time to eat. Granny, with the failing memory of the aged, did not even know all her friends by name, but Shurka stood out in the crowd, because Shurka was a veteran colonist, and because he was the liveliest and the most talkative of them all.

Shurka had come to Granny today for a most particular and important reason.

"Good day!"

"Good day, Shura! Where have you been all this time? Have you been ill?"

Shurka seated himself on a stool, smiting the knee of his new print trousers with the peak of a once white cap. His head bristled with stubbly flaxen hair, badly in need of clipping. His nose in the air, Shurka regarded the low ceiling.

"I haven't been ill. But my rabbit has."

Granny sat on the bed rummaging in the wooden box which contained most of her possessions—the scraps of stuff, reels of cotton and balls of wool composing a grandmother's treasures.

"Your rabbit's been ill—poor thing! You must feel it!"

"It can't be helped," said Shurka seriously, hardly able to suppress the anxiety in his screwed-up right eye.

"And if you were to try and cure it?" said Granny, looking at Shurka.

"I have nothing to cure it with," whispered Shurka.

"Do you need any medicine?"

"If I could only get some millet—half a glass of millet, that's all!"

"Would you like some tea, Shura?" asked Granny.

"Look, there's a kettle on the stove, and the glasses are over there. Pour some out for me, too."

Shurka laid his cap carefully on the stool and busied himself awkwardly at the high stove, while Granny, not without difficulty, stood on tiptoe and reached down from the shelf the pink bag in which she kept her millet.

Kozyr's domain—the wheelwrights' shed—was the meeting place of the gayest and noisiest company of all. Kozyr slept, as well as worked, there. In the corner of the shed was a low, home-made stove, and on the stove, a kettle. In another corner was a folding bed, covered with a patchwork quilt. Kozyr himself sat on the bed, his visitors on blocks of wood, on technical equipment, on heaps of wheel rims. All did their utmost to wring from Kozyr the abundant store of beliefs which he had accumulated in the course of his life.

Kozyr would smile wistfully.

"It's wrong, my children, it's wrong—God forgive us! the Lord will be angered!"

But before the Lord had time to vent his anger, Kalina Ivanovich got angry. From the dark aperture of the doorway, he emerged into the light, and exclaimed, waving his pipe:

"What are you making fun of an old man for? What business of yours is Jesus Christ, I'd like to know! I'll give you something that'll make you pray not only to Jesus Christ, but to Saint Nicholas, too!"

"May the Lord bless you, Kalina Ivanovich, for standing up for an old man!"

"If there's any more of such goings on, just you come and tell me! You can't manage these tramps without me—I wouldn't count too much on your Jesus Christs!"

The lads pretended to be afraid of Kalina Ivanovich, hastening out of the wheelwrights' shed to disperse themselves about the many other corners of the colony.

We no longer had the big barrack-like dormitories, our charges sleeping in small rooms, holding from six to eight persons. Under this system they were able to consolidate their groupings, and the characteristic features of each group stood out more vividly, making it more interesting to work with them. An eleventh detachment was formed—a detachment of younger ones, organized as a result of the steady insistence of Georgievsky. As before he was always looking after them—tending them, washing them, playing with them and scolding them, indulging them like a mother, filling the toughened souls of the other boys with wonder by his energy and patience. And this marvellous work of Georgievsky's did something to mitigate the unpleasantness which might have arisen from the general conviction that he was the son of an Irkutsk governor.

New teachers were added to the colony. I was still patiently seeking real people, and managed to fish some sort of material out of the not very brilliant pedagogical reserves. It was in the truck garden of the teachers' trade union, where he was working in the capacity of a watchman, that I discovered Pavel Ivanovich Zhurbin. Well-educated, kindly, disciplined, he was a stoic and a true gentleman. He had one feature in particular which I greatly appreciated—a connoisseur's delight in human nature. With the passion of a collector, he would descant upon individual traits of human psychology, the subtle convolutions of personality, the beauties of man's heroism, and the sombre depths of man's baseness. He had thought much of all this, while patiently scrutinizing the human crowd for signs of anything in the shape of new collective laws. I could see that his dilettante enthusiasm would never get him anywhere, but I liked the sincere, pure nature of the man.

Another discovery was Zinovi Ivanovich Butsai. About twenty-seven years old, he had only just graduated from art school and was recommended to us as an artist. We needed an artist, both for the school and for our theatre, and for all sorts of Komsomol activities.

Zinovi Ivanovich impressed us by the extremes to which all his characteristics were carried. He was extremely lean, extremely dark, and spoke in a bass voice so deep that it was hard to keep up a conversation with him, for he seemed to emit ultraviolet sounds. Zinovi Ivanovich was further distinguished by extreme calmness and imperturbability. He came to us in the end of November, and we were all agog to see what artistic innovations were to enrich our life. But Zinovi Ivanovich, before he ever took up his pencil, astonished us by another side of his artistic nature.

A few days after his arrival, the boys informed me that every morning he emerged naked from his room, with his coat slung over his shoulders, and went to bathe in the Kolomak. By the end of November the Kolomak had already begun to freeze, and soon became the colony skating rink. Zinovi Ivanovich, with the help of Otchenash, made a hole in the ice, and continued every day his terrible bathing. Soon after, he took to his bed with an attack of pleurisy which lasted a fortnight. The moment he recovered he was again clambering into the hole. In December he had bronchitis, with complications. Butsai missed lessons and upset our schedule. At last I lost patience, and requested him to stop this nonsense.

Zinovi Ivanovich replied huskily:

"I have a right to bathe whenever I see fit! This is not prohibited in the labour code. I have a right, also, to be ill, and therefore no one can make any official accusations against me."

"But Zinovi Ivanovich, old man," I protested, "I'm not doing it officially. Why should you torture yourself? I'm just sorry for you as a human being."

"In that case, I'll explain—my health is poor, my constitution is a scamped job. It's simply disgusting, you see, to have to live with such a constitution. I've made a firm resolution—either I'll harden it, so that I may be able to live with it in peace, or—to hell with it. Let it rip! I had four attacks of pleurisy last year, and this year, it's already December, and I've only had one. I don't think I shall have more than two. I purposely came to you, because there's a river so close at hand here."

I summoned Silanti and shouted at him:

"What's this nonsense? Here's a man going out of his mind, and you make holes in the ice for him."

Silanti extended his arms apologetically.

"Don't be cross, Anton Semyonovich! I couldn't help it, don't you see! I've had to do with a chap like this before. He wanted to depart this life, you see. He had made up his mind to drown himself. The moment you turn your back on him, there he is in the river, the beast. I simply exhausted myself, as they say, dragging him out again and again. And what d'you think—the lousy guy went and hanged himself. And that was a thing that had not come into my head. You see how it is! So I'm not going to get in this one's way, and that's all about it!"

Zinovi Ivanovich went bathing in the ice hole right up to May. The boys at first laughed at the presumption of this weakling, then they gradually began to feel respect for him, patiently tending him when he was laid up with pleurisy, bronchitis and common colds.

But there were weeks at a stretch during which the process of hardening Zinovi Ivanovich's organism was not accompanied by a rise in his temperature, and then it was that his truly artistic nature showed itself. An art circle rapidly came into being under his auspices, its members obtaining a small room in the attic, which they fitted out as a studio.

On sociable winter evenings enthusiastic work went on in Butsai's studio, and the walls of the attic shook with the laughter of the artists and admiring onlookers.

Several persons would be working at a huge cartoon in the light of a great oil lamp. Scratching his coal-black head with the handle of a paint brush, Zinovi Ivanovich would boom out like a choir leader recovering from a drinking bout:

"Add some sepia to Fedorenko! He's a muzhik, and you've made him into a merchant's wife—you lay on crimson lake, whether it's necessary or not!"

Vanka Lapot, carrotty, freckled, with a low-bridged nose, mimicking Zinovi Ivanovich, would answer in the same hoarse bass voice:

"I've used up all the sepia on Leshy."

It used to get quite noisy of an evening in my office, too. A couple of girl students had recently arrived from Kharkov, bearing a paper stating:

"The Kharkov Pedagogical Institute sends comrades K. Varskaya and R. Landsberg for practical acquaintance with the pedagogical system of work in the Maxim Gorky Colony."

I received these representatives of the young pedagogical generation with extreme curiosity. Both K. Varskaya and R. Landsberg were enviably youthful, not more than twenty years apiece. K. Varskaya was a pretty, plump blonde, small and active; she had a tender subtle blush which could only have been done justice to in water colour. Continually knotting her fine, almost invisible brows, and dismissing with an effort of her will the smile that kept rising to her lips, she subjected me to a regular interrogation.

"Do you have a pedological room?"

"We have no pedological room."

"How do you study personality, then?"

"The personality of the child?" I asked as gravely as I could.

"Yes, of course. The personality of your pupil."

"Why should it be studied?"

"Why? How can you work otherwise? How can you work on material you know nothing about?"

K. Varskaya piped out her words with energy and sincere emotion, continually turning towards her friend. R. Landsberg, dark-skinned, with glorious black plaits, lowered her eyes, restraining her natural indignation with patient indulgence.

"What dominants predominate among your charges?" asked K. Varskaya, sternly resolute.

"If the personality is not studied in the colony," interpolated R. Landsberg quietly, "it's no use talking about dominants."

"Not at all," I said seriously. "I can tell you something about dominants. The same dominants predominate here as they do with yourselves."

"How d'you know what we're like?" asked K. Varskaya in unfriendly tones.

"Aren't you sitting in front of me and talking?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Well—I can see right through you. You sit there just as if you were made of glass, and I see everything going on inside you."

K. Varskaya blushed, but just then Karabanov, Vershnev, Zadorov and a few other boys burst into the room.

"May we come in, or are you talking secrets?"

"Of course you can!" I said. "Let me introduce you—our guests, students from Kharkov."

"Guests! That's fine! What are your names?"

"Ksenia Romanovna Varskaya."

"Rakhil Semyonovna Landsberg."

Semyon Karabanov smote his cheek with the palm of his hand, exclaiming in mock alarm:

"Oh, my! Must it be so long? You're just Oksana, aren't you?"

"Very well!" agreed K. Varskaya.

"And you're—Rakhil. Will that do?"

"Just as you like," whispered R. Landsberg.

"All right! Now we can give you some supper. Are you students?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you say so right away—you must be as hungry as—well, what Vershnev and Zadorov would say—as dogs. But let's say—as kittens, shall we?"

"As a matter of fact, we are hungry," laughed Oksana. "Is there anywhere we can wash?"

"Come on! We'll hand you over to the girls. You can do what you like there."

Thus passed our first acquaintance. Every evening they came to me, but only for a brief moment. The talk about the study of personality was never revived—Oksana and Rakhil had no time. The kids drew them into the shoreless ocean of colony affairs, amusements and conflicts, familiarizing them with a host of fundamental problems. It was hard for a live human being to avoid the whirlpools and little eddies appearing now and then in the collective; before one had time to turn around, one got sucked in and carried off. It sometimes happened that the current brought somebody right into my office, and threw him there, as if on shore.

One evening an interesting group—Oksana, Rakhil, Silanti and Bratchenko—was thrown up.

Oksana was holding Silanti by the sleeve and laughingly exclaiming:

“Come on, come on, what are you hanging back for?”

Silanti really was hanging back.

“He’s carrying out a demoralizing policy in the colony, and you’ve never noticed it,” said Oksana.

“What’s the matter, Silanti?” I asked.

Silanti freed his sleeve angrily, and smoothed the top of his bald head.

“It’s like this, you see,” he said. “This here sleigh was left in the yard. Semyon, and these here, took it into their heads to go tobogganing, you see. Anton—there he is!—let him tell you himself.”

“They went on and on at me—tobogganing!” said Anton. “Well, I gave Semyon one with the saddle strap, so he was away. But these two would listen to nothing, and kept on tugging at the sleigh, what could I do? If I used the saddle strap, they’d cry. And then Silanti said to them—”

“That’s just it!” cried the indignant Oksana. “Let Silanti repeat what he said!”

“What’s there to make such a fuss about?” said Silanti. “I told them the truth, and that’s all about it. I said: ‘You want to get married, and that’s why you break up sleighs.’ You see how it is.”

“That’s not all! That’s not all!”

“What more? That’s all I said.”

“He said to Anton: ‘Harness her to the sleigh and make her pull you to Goncharovka, that’ll quiet her down in a jiffy.’ Is that what you said?”

“And I’ll say it again—they’re healthy wenches, with nothing to do, and we haven’t enough horses, you see how it is!”

“Oh!” exclaimed Oksana. “Get out! Get out of here! Quick march!”

Silanti laughed and escaped with Anton from the office. Oksana threw herself on to the sofa, on which Rakhil had been dozing for some time.

“Silanti is an interesting personality,” I said. “You should take up the study of it.”

Oksana rushed out of the office, but stopped in the doorway to say, in laughing imitation:

"I can see right through him. He's made of glass!"

Rushing out of the door with these parting words, she fell into a crowd of colonists. I heard her voice ring out and then lose itself in the familiar colony vortex.

"Go to bed, Rakhil," I said.

"What? I'm not sleepy, am I? Are you?"

"I'm going."

"All right then. . . . Of course. . . ."

Rubbing her left eye with her fist, like a child, she pressed my hand and blundered out of the office, catching her shoulder in the frame of the door.

4

OUR THEATRE

All that has been related in the previous chapter formed only a very slight part of our winter evening occupations. Looking back I feel a certain shame in confessing it—but almost all our spare time was devoted to the theatre.

In the new colony we got possession of a real theatre. It would be difficult to describe the rapture we experienced on having the mill shed placed entirely at our disposal.

Our theatre could have seated up to six hundred persons—as many as the spectators from several villages. The importance of the dramatic circle was greatly increased, and the demand for it increased accordingly.

True, there were certain inconveniences in the theatre. Kalina Ivanovich considered these inconveniences so great that he proposed turning the theatre into a cart shed.

"If you put a cart in it, it won't suffer from the cold," he said, "and you won't have to put a stove in. But for an audience you need stoves."

"All right, then, we'll put stoves in."

"It'll be as much good as a handshake to a beggar. You can see for yourself there's no ceiling there, just an iron roof with nothing under it. When you heat the stove it'll be just heating the kingdom of heaven for the cherubim and seraphim, not the audience. And what sort of a

stove can you put in? You'll need some sort of an iron stove, and who's going to let you put in an iron stove—it would be asking for a fire. You'll have to begin the performance and call out the fire brigade at the same time.”

But we did not agree with Kalina Ivanovich, especially as Silanti said:

“It's like this, you see. The performance will be free, and a fire won't be any trouble, no one will hold it against us.”

We put in various cast-iron stoves, and only heated them during performances. They were never able to heat the theatrical atmosphere, since all the heat from them flew right up and escaped through the iron roof. So that, although the stoves themselves always became red-hot, the spectators preferred to sit in their coats, taking care only that the side next to the stove should not be scorched.

We only once had a fire in our theatre, and that not from a stove, but from a lamp falling on to the stage. A stampede did break out, but it was rather an original one, the audience remaining in their seats, and the colonists clambering up on to the stage in unfeigned delight, while Karabanov shouted at them:

“You idiots—haven't you ever seen a fire before?”

We made a real stage—spacious, high, with a complicated system of wings, and a prompter's box. Behind the stage was a large free space, but we were unable to make use of it. In order to create for the actors a bearable temperature, we screened off from this space a small room, put a temporary stove into it, and made up and changed there, maintaining somehow or other order of precedence and the division of the sexes. In the rest of the space behind the wings, and on the stage itself, it was as cold as out of doors.

In the auditorium were a few dozen rows of plank benches, a vast ocean of seats, a marvellous field for cultural work, fairly asking to be sown and reaped.

Our theatrical activity in the new colony developed very rapidly, and in the course of three winters, its tempo never for a moment relaxing and its scope never contracting, it expanded to such imposing dimensions that it is hard for me to believe now what I am writing.

During the winter season we produced about forty plays, but we never went in for the usual light entertainment found in clubs, offering only full-length, serious plays in four and five acts, mostly taken from the repertoire of the theatres in the capital. This may have been the most incomparable cheek, but it was certainly not hack work.

From our third performance, the fame of our theatre spread far beyond the boundaries of Goncharovka. We were visited by the inhabitants of Pirogovka, Grabilovka, Babichevka, Gontsy, Vatsy, Storozhevoye, by the dwellers in the Volovy, Chumatsky, Ozersky farmsteads, by workers from suburban settlements, railway workers from the station and from the engine works; and soon the town dwellers also began to come to us—teachers, people from the Department of Public Education, military men, Soviet employees, cooperative employees and supply workers, and just young men and girls, friends of our own boys and girls, and friends of their friends. By the end of the first winter, on Saturdays, a regular encampment of folk from afar would begin from dinner-time to form around our theatre shed. Moustached individuals in sheepskins and heavy coats would be unharnessing their horses, covering them with sacking and horse blankets and clattering with their pails around the well sweep, while their womenfolk, muffled up to the eyes, after dancing about in front of the shed to warm their feet, chilled by the journey, would run into the bedrooms of our girls, swaying on their high ironshod heels, to warm themselves and renew recently formed friendships. Many of them drew out bags and bundles from beneath the straw. They had brought with them provisions for the distant theatrical excursion—pies, wheat cakes, squares of lard scored across, and various kinds of sausages. A great part of these provisions was intended for treating the members of the colony, and there were sometimes regular feasts, until the Komsomol Bureau flatly prohibited the acceptance of any presents whatsoever from visiting spectators.

On Saturdays the stoves in the theatre were heated from two o'clock, to enable our visitors to warm themselves. But the closer their acquaintance with us, the

more they tended to make their way into the premises of the colony. Even in the dining room a group of privileged visitors could be seen, general favourites whom our monitors felt entitled to invite to the table.

The performances came heavy on the funds of the colony. Forty or fifty rubles went on costumes, wigs and other appurtenances. One way or another about two hundred rubles a month was spent. This was a great outlay, but we never sank so low as to charge our spectators a single kopek by way of entrance fee. It was the young people we aimed at, and the village youth, especially the girls, never had any pocket money.

At first no tickets were required for entrance to the theatre, but the time soon came when the shed could no longer hold all who wanted to come, and we had to introduce a system of tickets, distributed beforehand among the Komsomol organizations, the Village Soviets, and our own particular local representatives.

To our surprise we encountered remarkable eagerness for the theatre on the part of the rural population. Quarrels and misunderstandings over tickets were continually arising between individual villages. Agitated secretaries would use quite aggressive language to us:

"Why have we only been given thirty tickets for tomorrow?"

Zhorka Volkov, the box-office manager, would shake his head sarcastically in the face of the secretary.

"Even that's a lot for you."

"A lot! You sit here like bureaucrats, and you think you know what's a lot for us!"

"We sit here, and we see how the priest's daughters come in on our tickets."

"The priest's daughters! What d'you mean?"

"The priest's daughters. The red-haired ones."

Recognizing the description of the local priest's daughters, the secretary changed his tone, but stuck to his guns.

"Well, all right—the two daughters of the priest. But why did you cut us down twenty tickets? There used to be fifty, and now we only get thirty."

"We've lost confidence in you," replied Zhorka severely. "Two priest's daughters, and how many priests' wives and shopkeepers' wives we don't know. It's not our

business to find out how far the rot has spread among you."

"And who's the son-of-a-bitch who gave us away, I'd like to know?"

"We don't keep a list of sons-of-bitches either. Thirty's a lot for you."

The secretary, stung to the quick, hastened home to investigate the newly-discovered rot, but his place would instantly be filled by another malcontent.

"What d'you mean by this, Comrade? We have fifty Komsomols, and you send us only fifteen tickets!"

"According to the report of mixed detachment 6-P, only fifteen sober Komsomols came last time, and four of these were old women. All the rest were drunk."

"Nothing of the sort! Whoever says they were drunk is lying. Our members work at the distillery, and of course they smell of the fumes. . . ."

"We checked up on them—their breaths smelt, it's no good trying to put it on to the distillery."

"I'll bring them to you, you'll see for yourself, they always smell, and you're just trying to pick holes, and invent things. What sort of a line d'you call this?"

"None of that! We always know when they only smell because of their work, and when they're drunk."

"Well, add five tickets at least—you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! You give out tickets to all sorts of girls in the town, and friends, and our Komsomols come last."

Suddenly we realized that the theatre was no mere entertainment or amusement for ourselves, but our duty, an inevitable social tax, the payment of which could not be evaded.

Our Komsomol Bureau thought it over earnestly. The dramatic circle could not carry such a weight on its shoulders. It had become unthinkable for a single Saturday to pass without a performance, and we gave a different play every week. To repeat a performance would have been to lower our banner, and spoil an evening for our nearest neighbours, who were our constant visitors. Various complications arose in the dramatic circle.

Even Karabanov cried for quarter.

"Am I a pack-horse, or what? Last week I was a high priest, this week a general, and now you want me to be a guerrilla fighter. D'you think I'm made of iron? Rehearsals every night up till two, and on Saturdays move tables and do scene shifting!"

Koval, supporting himself on his fists, which were pressed against the table, shouted:

"Perhaps you'd like a couch put under a pear tree for you to rest on? It's got to be done!"

"If it's got to be done, then organize it so that everyone works."

"We will organize it."

"Go on then—organize!"

"Call a Commanders' Council!"

At the Commanders' Council the Bureau resolved: no more dramatic circle—everyone must take part, and no nonsense!

In the Council they were fond of formulating matters by an order. This is how they formulated it:

§ 5

By resolution of the Commanders' Council, work on preparations for performances to be considered binding on each member of the colony, hence mixed detachments are assigned for work in connection with the performance of *The Adventures of the Non-Such Tribe*.

Further followed a list of mixed detachments, as if the matter was not one of high art, but of weeding beetroot, or earthing potatoes. The profanation of art began with the appointment of mixed detachment 6-A, consisting of twenty eight persons under the command of Vershnev, for work on a given performance, instead of the dramatic circle.

And the mixed detachment meant compulsory attendance and no unpunctuality, offenders named in the evening report, the commanders' order, the familiar "Very good!", accompanied by a salute; the slightest dereliction of duty was brought before the Commanders' Council or the general meeting, as breach of colony discipline, of which the result at the best would be a talking-to from me, and a few extra jobs or home arrest on a non-working day.

This was a real reform. After all, the dramatic circle was a voluntary organization, and as such always a little inclined to excessive "democratism" and fluctuation in membership, moreover, a dramatic circle is always the battlefield of individual tastes and claims. This was especially noticeable during the choice of a play and the distribution of roles. And in our dramatic circle the personal element, also, was beginning to make itself felt. But a resolution of the Bureau and the Commanders' Council was accepted in the colony as a settled thing, admitting of no doubts, and a theatre in the colony was thus placed upon the same footing as work on the land, the repairing of the estate, order and cleanliness within doors. The particular part taken by this or that colonist in connection with a performance had become a matter of indifference so far as the colony's interests were concerned—each must do what was demanded of him.

As a rule I announced at the Sunday Commanders' Council the play for the following Saturday, and the names of the colonists cast for the respective roles. All these colonists were immediately included in 6-A Mixed, and a commander appointed from among their number. The rest were divided up into theatrical mixed detachments, all bearing the number 6, and functioning till the end of a given performance. There were the following mixed detachments:

Six-A	actors
Six-S	spectators
Six-W	wardrobe
Six-H	heating
Six-Sc	scenery
Six-P	properties
Six-LE	lighting- and stage-effects
Six-CU	cleaning up
Six-SE	sound-effects
Six-C	curtain

If it is borne in mind that up till now there were only eighty colonists, it will be quite obvious that there was never a single colonist left over, and if the play chosen had a great many characters in it, our forces were quite inadequate. While making up the mixed detachments, the

Commanders' Council naturally did its best to take into account individual desires and inclinations, but this was not always possible. It often happened that a colonist would ask:

"Why have I been appointed to 6-A? I've never acted in my life!"

"You're talking like a muzhik," he would be told. "Everybody has to act for the first time one day or other."

Throughout the week all these mixed detachments, especially their commanders, spent their spare time rushing about the colony, and even the town, like madmen. It was not our way to accept excuses, however good, and our mixed detachment commanders were often in difficulties. True, we had friends in the town, and there were many who sympathized with our cause. Thus, for example, we were almost always able to get hold of suitable costumes for any play whatsoever, and when this was impossible, Six-W Mixed knew how to make them for any historical period, and in any number, from all sorts of stuff, and from various articles in the colony itself. It was, moreover, considered that not only anything belonging to the colony, but also anything belonging to the staff was entirely at the disposal of our theatrical detachments. Six-P Mixed, for example, was firmly convinced that properties were so named because they were the property of the staff. With the development of our enterprise, permanent theatrical supplies began to be accumulated, to a limited extent, within the colony. Since we frequently produced plays of a military nature, demanding the firing of shots, we acquired a veritable arsenal, as well as all sorts of military uniforms, shoulder straps and medals. Gradually experts, and these not only actors, began to emerge from the colony collective. We had splendid machine gunners, producing, with the aid of inventions of their own, proper machine-gun fire, and there were artillerymen, Elijahs, who could produce the most convincing thunder and lightning.

One week was allowed for the study of roles. At first we tried to do the thing properly—copying out the parts and trying to memorize them—but we soon gave this up. There was no time either for copying or memorizing, for after all we had our everyday work to do in the

colony, and school to attend, and the learning of lessons had to come first. Ignoring all theatrical conventions, we relied entirely upon the prompter, and it was a good thing we did. The colonists became adepts at picking up their words from the prompter; we even allowed ourselves the luxury of fighting against individual interpolations and all sorts of license on the stage. But for a performance to go smoothly it was necessary for me to add to my duties as producer those of prompter, whose functions comprised not only prompting, but the direction of all that went on on the stage as well—seeing to correct staging, pointing out mistakes, timing shots, embraces and deaths.

We never suffered a dearth of actors. There were many gifted individuals among the colonists. Our star performers were Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich, Karabanov, Vetkovsky, Butsai, Vershnev, Zadorov, Marusya Levchenko, Kudlaty, Koval, Gleiser and Lapot.

We tried to select plays with a long list of characters, for a great many of the colonists wanted to act, and we were anxious to increase the number of persons capable of behaving naturally on the stage. I attributed great importance to the theatre, since through its agency the colonists' way of speaking was greatly improved, and their horizons broadened. Sometimes, however, we did not have enough actors, and then we invited members of the staff to help us out. Once we even made Silanti go on stage. At rehearsals he showed himself to be but an indifferent actor, but as he only had to utter the one sentence: "The train will be three hours late," the risk was not great. But the reality exceeded our expectations.

Silanti came on at the proper moment, and seemed to be all right, but what he said was: "This here train, you see, it's three hours late, and that's how it is."

This statement produced an extraordinary impression on the audience, but that was nothing—it produced a still greater impression on the crowd of refugees waiting at the station. These waltzed about the stage in utter helplessness, paying not the slightest heed to my appeals from the prompter's box, the more so that I myself was obviously not unmoved. Silanti observed all these goings-on for a few moments, and then lost his temper.

"You've been told, you oafs, you! This here train will be three hours late—what's so funny?"

The refugees heard Silanti out with delight, and then rushed off stage in panic.

I recovered my senses, and whispered:

"Get the hell out of here! Silanti, just you go to the devil!"

"Well, you see!..."

I stood the book on end—a signal for the curtain to be lowered.

It was difficult to get actresses. Levchenko and Nastya Nochevnaya could act after a fashion—but no one excepting Lydochka could be found among the staff. And these women were not born for the stage; they were too shy, flatly refusing to take part in embracing or kissing, even when the play absolutely demanded this. And we could not get on without lovers. In our search for actresses, we tried out all the wives, sisters, aunts, and other relatives of our staff, and the people at the mill, and persuaded friends in the town to lend a hand, and even then could hardly get ourselves provided. And so the day after their arrival at the colony, Oksana and Rakhil were already taking part in rehearsals, winning our admiration by their marked ability to kiss without the slightest embarrassment.

Once we managed to rope in a chance spectator, some friend of the miller's, arriving from town on a visit. She turned out to be a treasure—her beauty, her soft rich voice, her eyes, her gait—she had everything required for the part of some depraved great lady in a revolutionary play. At rehearsals we melted with pleasure, and looked forward to a brilliant success on the first night. The performance started off with the utmost verve, but in the first interval the treasure's husband, a railway telegraph operator, came backstage and said to his wife, in front of the whole troupe:

"I can't allow you to act in this play. Come on home!"

The treasure whispered in dismay:

"How can I? What about the play?"

"The play is none of my business. Come on! I'm not going to allow my wife to be hugged and pulled about the stage by all and sundry!"

"We can't do that!"

"You've been kissed ten times in the first scene alone. It's disgusting!"

At first we were simply aghast. Then we tried to talk the jealous spouse round.

"But Comrade, kissing on the stage means nothing," said Karabanov.

"I can see whether it means anything or not. D'you think I'm blind? I was sitting in the front row."

I addressed Lapot.

"You're a clever chap, try to get round him somehow or other!"

Lapot went to work with the utmost thoroughness. He caught hold of the jealous spouse by the button, seated him on a bench, and began murmuring caressingly in his ear.

"You're a funny chap! And such a useful, cultured cause, too! If your wife kisses somebody in such a good cause, nothing but good can come of it!"

"It may be good for somebody, but it's not a bit good for me," insisted the telegraphist.

"But it's good for everyone!"

"According to you, then, anyone can kiss my wife!"

"Funny chap! It's better than if she found one guy to do it."

"What guy?"

"It happens sometimes. And then, think! Here it's in front of everyone, and you see it, too. It would be much worse if it was somewhere under a bush, without you knowing anything about it."

"She wouldn't do that!"

"Wouldn't she? Your wife kisses so nicely—do you think, with her talent, she'll let it run to waste? Better she should do it on the stage."

The husband with difficulty allowed himself to be won over by Lapot's arguments, and, setting his teeth, permitted his wife to finish the play, on the sole condition that the kisses were not to be "real" ones. He left us still resentful. The treasure was upset. We were afraid the performance would be ruined. The husband sat in the front row, hypnotizing everyone, like a boa constrictor. The second act proceeded in a funereal atmosphere,

but to the delight of all, by the third act the husband was no longer in the front row. I couldn't think where he had got to. The mystery was only cleared up after the performance.

"I advised him to go," said Karabanov modestly. "At first he didn't want to, but then he agreed."

"How did you do it?"

Karabanov's eyes flashed, he pulled a diabolical grimace, and hissed:

"Listen! We'd better come to an understanding. Today everything'll be all right, but if you don't go at once, I give you my colonist's word of honour, we'll make a cuckold of you. We have such guys here that your wife won't be able to resist them!"

"And then what?" asked the actors delightedly.

"Nothing! He only said: 'Very well, see you keep your promise,' and went to the last row."

There were rehearsals every day, and the whole play would be gone through. We did not get enough sleep as a rule. It must be borne in mind that many of our actors were still unable to cross the stage properly, and so whole episodes had to be learnt by heart, beginning with a single movement of a hand or foot, a single pose of the head, a glance, a turn. It was to all this that I turned my attention, trusting that the lines would be supplied by the prompter, anyhow. By Saturday evening the play would be considered ready.

It must, however, be admitted that we did not act badly—many of the townspeople were very pleased with our performances. We tried to act artistically, without overdoing it, or pandering to the tastes of the public, or striving after cheap success. We produced Ukrainian plays and Russian plays.

On Saturdays things got lively around the theatre from two o'clock onwards. If there were many characters, Butsai, assisted by Pyotr Ivanovich, would begin making them up immediately after dinner. From two to eight p.m. they could get as many as sixty people ready, and make themselves up afterwards.

When it was a matter of getting properties for a performance the colonists behaved more like wild beasts than human beings. If a lamp with a blue shade was

needed on the stage they would raid not only the rooms of the staff, but the rooms of friends in town, and the lamp with the blue shade would be sure to be forthcoming. If they sat down to supper on the stage, the supper must be a real one, without any evasions. This was demanded not only by the thoroughness of 6-P Mixed, but by tradition. To have supper on the stage upon dummy dishes would have seemed to our actors unworthy of the colony. Our kitchen, therefore, was sometimes confronted with difficult tasks—the preparation of hors d'oeuvres and entrées, the baking of pies and cakes. For wine we used cider.

In my prompter's box I was always in a twitter during a supper scene: the actors at such moments became so engrossed in their roles that they ceased to heed the prompter, dragging the scene out till nothing was left on the table. I was usually forced to speed up a scene by such remarks as:

"That'll do! D'you hear? Stop eating, confound you!"

The actors would glance at me in astonishment, motioning with their eyes towards a half-eaten goose, and would only leave the table when, in a white heat of rage, I would hiss:

"Karabanov—get up from the table! Semyon, you devil, say: 'I'm off!'"

Karabanov would hastily bolt the half-chewed mouthful of goose, and say:

"I'm off!"

And in the wings, during the interval, I would be reproached.

"Anton Semyonovich, how could you? How often does one get a chance to eat such a goose? And you wouldn't let us finish it!"

But the actors were not as a rule anxious to stay too long on the stage, where it was as cold as out of doors.

In *The Riot of the Machines* Karabanov had to stay a whole hour on the stage, with nothing on but a loincloth. The performance took place in February, and, unluckily for us, the thermometer sometimes fell to thirty degrees below zero.* Ekaterina Grigoryevna insisted on the per-

* Celsius. Fahrenheit 22°.—*Tr.*

formance being cancelled, assuring us that Semyon would certainly be frozen. But everything was all right—only Semyon's toes were frozen, and after the act Ekaterina Grigoryevna rubbed him with some sort of a warming mixture.

But the cold did sometimes stand in the way of our artistic development. We were giving a play called *Comrade Semivzvodny*. The scene was laid in the garden of a landowner, and there was supposed to be a statue. Six-P Mixed could find no statue, though they looked in all the town cemeteries, and they decided to do without. But when the curtain went up, to my astonishment I did see a statue—there was Shelaputin thickly powdered with chalk, and wrapped in a sheet, looking slyly down at me from a draped stool. I lowered the curtain and chivied the statue off the stage, to the great disappointment of 6-P Mixed.

The efforts of 6-SE Mixed (sound-effects) were particularly conscientious and ingenious. We were producing *Azef*. Sazonov was to throw a bomb at Plehve. The bomb was to explode. Osadchy, the commander of 6-SE Mixed, declared:

“We'll make that a real explosion.”

Since I was acting Plehve myself, I was more interested in this question than anyone else.

“And what d'you mean by ‘real’?” I inquired.

“One which could blow the theatre to smithereens.”

“That's a bit too much,” I said cautiously.

“It'll be all right,” Osadchy assured me. “It'll all come right in the end.”

Before the scene with the explosion, Osadchy showed me his preparations—in front of the wings were placed a few empty tubs, beside each tub stood a colonist with a double-barrelled gun, charged with about enough to kill an elephant. On the other side of the stage, bits of glass were strewn about the floor, a colonist with a brick posted beside each bit. On the third side, opposite the entrance to the stage, about half a dozen kids were placed with lighted candles in front of them, and bottles containing liquid of some sort in their hands.

“What's the funeral for?” I asked.

“That's the chief thing. They've got paraffin. When

the time comes they'll fill their mouths with paraffin and blow it on to the candles. It'll be splendid!"

"Confound you! There might be a fire!"

"Don't worry, only take care not to get any paraffin in your eyes—if there's a fire we'll put it out."

He pointed to yet another line of colonists, at whose feet were pails full of water.

Surrounded on three sides by these preparations, I began to feel in sober earnest the unfortunate minister's sense of impending doom. I told myself quite seriously that, inasmuch as I personally was not required to answer for all the crimes of Plehve, I had the right, if the worst came to the worst, to escape through the auditorium. I endeavoured once more to moderate the conscientious zeal of Osadchy.

"But can paraffin be extinguished with water?" I asked.

Osadchy was invulnerable, he knew all this side of the business and could explain it in the most erudite manner.

"When paraffin is blown on to the flame of a candle, it is converted into gas, and does not require extinguishing. Other objects may have to be extinguished."

"Me, for example?"

"We'll put you out first of all."

I submitted to my fate. If I was not burned to death I should at least be doused with cold water, and that at a temperature of nearly twenty degrees below zero! But how could I expose my pusillanimity in front of the whole of 6-SE Mixed, which had expended so much energy and inventiveness on the preparations for the explosion?

When Sazonov threw the bomb I once more had the opportunity of getting into Plehve's skin, and I did not envy him. The hunting rifles were fired at the tubs, and the tubs shivered, bursting their hoops and my eardrums, the bricks descended with terrific force upon the glass, five or six mouths blew the paraffin with all the force of youthful lungs on to the candle flames, and the whole stage was suddenly converted into a suffocating, flaming vortex. I could not have played my own death badly if I had wanted to, and fell down almost unconscious, beneath a deafening roar of applause and the enthusiastic

yells of 6-SE Mixed. From above, black, greasy paraffin ash fell upon me. The curtain was drawn, and Osadchy helped me up by my armpits, asking anxiously:

"You're not burning anywhere?"

I was burning inwardly, but I said nothing about that—who knows what 6-SE Mixed had prepared for such a contingency!

In the same way we blew up a steamer during one of its unfortunate cruises to the revolutionary shores of the U.S.S.R. The mechanics of this event were still more complicated. Not only was it necessary for a spurt of flame to come out of every porthole, but it had to be shown that the steamer really did go up into the air. For this purpose a few colonists took up their position on the other side of the steamer, and threw up boards, chairs and stools. They managed to shelter their heads from all these objects, but the captain, Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich, was not so fortunate—the paper gold lace on his sleeves caught fire, and he was badly bruised by the falling furniture. However, not only did he not complain, but we had to wait half an hour, till he had his laugh out, before we could learn for certain that all the captain's organs were in order.

There were some parts which were difficult for us to play. The colonists refused to admit, for example, of any shots "off stage." If you were to be shot, then you must prepare yourself for a severe ordeal. For your murder, an ordinary revolver was usually employed, the bullets removed from the cartridges, and all the free space stuffed with hemp and wadding. At the critical moment a volley of fire would be poured out on you, and as the marksman would inevitably be carried away by his role, he was sure to aim at your eyes. If several shots were to be fired, the whole of the barrel would be filled for your benefit, using the same infernal device.

The audience, after all, had the advantage of us: they could sit in warm coats, with stoves placed about the room, and the only prohibitions were against nibbling sunflower seeds and arriving drunk at the theatre. According to an old tradition, any citizen found, after the most searching investigation, to smell the least little bit of spirits, was considered drunk. The colonists were able

to spot persons giving off this smell, or even the hint of it, among several hundred spectators, and were still better able to drag them from their seats, and turn them out of the theatre in disgrace, ruthlessly ignoring the most plausible protests:

“Upon my word, I’ve had nothing but a mug of beer I drank in the morning!”

As producer I had yet more sufferings, both during and before performances. There was a certain phrase, for example, which Kudlaty boggled every time, with ridiculous effect, and while the colonists acted splendidly in Gogol’s *Inspector General*, by the end of the performance they had reduced me to blind fury, for even my strong nerves could not bear it when, in the last act, my fellow actors insisted on calling me Anton Semyonovich, while I was acting the part of the Governor—Anton *Antonovich*. In their version the scene went as follows:

AMOS FEDOROVICH: Is it true, Anton Semyonovich? Has such an extraordinary stroke of luck come your way?

ARTEMI FILIPPOVICH: I have the honour to congratulate Anton Semyonovich on his extraordinary good fortune. I rejoiced cordially when I heard of it. Anna Andreyevna! Maria Antonovna!

RASTAKOVSKY: Anton Semyonovich, I congratulate you! God send you and the young couple long life and an innumerable progeny, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Anna Andreyevna! Maria Antonovna!

KOROBKIN: I have the honour to congratulate Anton Semyonovich!

The worst of it was that on the stage, in my Governor’s uniform, I had no way of dealing with these monsters. I was only able to give vent to my wrath in the wings, after the final dumb-show scene.

“Confound you—what’s all this? Were you making a fool of me? Was it on purpose?”

Astonished countenances gazed at me, and Zadorov, who had been playing the postmaster, asked:

“What’s the matter? What’s happened? It all went so well!”

"Why did you call me Anton Semyonovich?"

"And how ought we to. . . . So we did! . . . Damn! . . . the Governor is Anton *Antonovich*, so he is!"

"At the rehearsals you called me right."

"What the hell . . . that was rehearsals, and somehow on the stage one loses one's head. . . ."

5

KULAK EDUCATION

On the 26th of March we celebrated the anniversary of A. M. Gorky's birthday. We kept other anniversaries too, but of these later. We tried to have our celebrations well attended, and our tables well provided, and the colonists, it must be said, enjoyed celebrating, especially preparing for it. But Gorky's birthday had a particular charm for us. On that day we welcomed in the spring. That was one thing. Sometimes it would happen that the boys would set out the festive boards—out of doors, of course!—so that we could all sit together and feast, when suddenly a hostile gust would come from the east, keen, cruel sleet would come down, the puddles in the yard would wrinkle over, and the drums, all drawn up to salute the colours in honour of our celebrations, would be damp. Just the same, a colonist would give a squinting glance towards the east and say: "How it smells of spring!"

There was one feature of our Gorky celebrations which we invented ourselves and of which we were inordinately proud and fond. The colonists had long ago determined that we would celebrate on that day "with all our might," but that we would not invite a single outsider. Anyone taking it into his head to come, would be a welcome guest, just because he had come on his own initiative, but this was a family holiday, and there was no part for outsiders in it. And truly, everything was always very simple and intimate, drawing the Gorkytes still closer, although there was nothing domestic about the forms of the celebrations themselves. We began with a parade, solemnly bringing out the banner; speeches were made, and then there was a solemn march past the portrait of Gorky. After this we sat down to table and—

I will indulge in no false modesty!—while we did not *drink* to the health of Gorky, we did eat—and how! Kalina Ivanovich, rising from the table, would say:

“I see now that we were wrong to blame the bourgeois, the parasites! After such a dinner, you know, even a dumb animal wouldn’t work, let alone a human being.”

Our menu was as follows—borshch, but it was no ordinary borshch: a borshch such as a housewife only makes for the name day of the head of the family; then pies, stuffed with meat, cabbage, rice, cream cheese, potatoes, and cereals, and every pie was such a size, it could not even have got into a colonist’s pocket; after the pies came roast pork, not bought in the market, but from our own herd, raised by the tenth detachment since the autumn, specially for the Gorky celebrations. The colonists knew how to look after a herd of pigs, but nobody wanted to slaughter one—even Stupitsyn, commander of the tenth, refused.

“I can’t kill it! I’m sorry for it! Cleopatra is such a good pig!”

Cleopatra was slaughtered, of course, by Silanti Otchenash, who explained his actions as follows:

“Let our enemies eat dead pig—*we’ll kill*, as they say, the good ones! That’s how it is!”

After the dispatch of Cleopatra, we could well have done with a rest, but big and little bowls of thick sour cream made their appearance on the table, and at their sides, piles of cheesecake fritters. And not a single colonist was in a hurry to rest, but, on the contrary, gave full attention to the fritters and sour cream. And after the fritters came fruit jelly, and not served, as for the gentry, in saucers, but in soup plates, and I nowhere observed a colonist eating his jelly without bread or a pie. It was only after this that dinner was considered over, and every one on rising from the table received a bag of sweets and spice-biscuits. In this connection, also, Kalina Ivanovich spoke a true word:

“Oh, if only Gorkys were born oftener!”

After dinner the colonists did not retire to rest, but set off in Mixed Sixth to prepare for the performance of *The Lower Depths*—the last play of the season. Kalina Ivanovich took a great interest in the performance.

"We'll see, we'll see what sort of a play this is. I've heard a lot about these here depths, but I've never seen them. And somehow I've never had the chance to read the play."

It should be remarked that in this case Kalina Ivanovich greatly exaggerated the chance nature of his bad luck: for in reality he was barely able to penetrate the mystery of reading. However, Kalina Ivanovich is in high spirits today, and it would be a shame to cavil at him. The Gorky anniversary was celebrated this year with a new feature: on the suggestion of the Komsomol organization, the title of "Colonist" was first introduced. Both the colonists and the teaching staff discussed this innovation long and seriously, and at last agreed that it was a good idea. The title of "Colonist" was only given to those who truly valued the colony, and worked for its improvement. But those who lagged behind, who complained, muttered, or played truant, would remain mere "charges." It must be admitted that there were not very many of these—not more than about twenty. Older members of the staff also received the title of "Colonist." At the same time it was resolved: if a staff member did not receive this title during the first year of work, he would have to leave the colony.

Each colonist received a nickel-plated badge, made to our special order in a Kharkov factory. The badge was in the form of a life belt, inscribed with the letters "M.G."*, and on top was a red star.

On this day, Kalina Ivanovich, too, was given a badge at the parade. He was extremely happy about this, and did not conceal his delight.

"Long as I served that there Nikolai Alexandrovich,** all I got for it was to be made a hussar, and these tramps, the parasites, have given me a medal! And there's nothing to be done about it—it's quite a pleasure, you know! See how it is when they get state power into their hands! They go naked themselves, but they give one a medal!"

Kalina Ivanovich's happiness was somewhat damped by the unexpected arrival of Maria Kondratyevna

* Maxim Gorky.—*Tr.*

** Tsar Nicholas II.—*Tr.*

Bokova. A month before, she had been appointed to our Gubernia Department of Social Education, and while she was not our immediate chief, she still to a certain extent kept her eye on us.

While descending from the hired cab, she had noted with astonishment our festive tables, at which those colonists who had served up the dinner were finishing the feast. Kalina Ivanovich hastened to profit by her astonishment and disappear unnoticed, leaving me to pay for his sins too.

"What are you celebrating?" asked Maria Kondratyevna.

"Gorky's birthday."

"Why didn't you invite me?"

"We don't invite any outsiders for this day. It's our custom."

"Give me some dinner, anyhow."

"That we can do. Where's Kalina Ivanovich disappeared to?"

"Oh, that awful old man! The beekeeper? Was it he who ran away from me just now? And you were mixed up in this wretched affair, too! They're always teasing me in the Gubernia Department of Public Education, now. The commandant says he'll dock two years off my pay. Where's that Kalina Ivanovich? Send him here!"

Maria Kondratyevna made a cross face, but I could see that Kalina Ivanovich was in no special danger. Maria Kondratyevna was in a good humour. I sent a colonist for him. Kalina Ivanovich approached, bowing from afar.

"Don't you come any nearer!" laughed Maria Kondratyevna. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! It's simply awful!"

Kalina Ivanovich seated himself on a bench and said:

"We did a good deed."

I had been the witness of Kalina Ivanovich's crime the week before. He and I had gone to the Department of Public Education and visited the office of Maria Kondratyevna on some trifling business. She had a huge office, crammed with furniture made of some special sort of wood. In the middle of the office was Maria Kondratyevna's desk. She was extremely popular: round her desk

there was invariably a crowd of typical Department-of-Education people, with one of whom she would be talking, while another butted in on the conversation and a third simply listened; others would be using the telephone, writing at one side of the desk, reading; somebody's hand would be pushing a paper for signature towards her, and, in addition to all these busy ones, there would be a whole lot of people just standing about and talking. The room was always full of chatter, smoke, and litter.

Kalina Ivanovich and I were sitting on a sofa discussing business of our own. Suddenly a thin, violently agitated woman burst into the office, and started pouring out a stream of words into our ears. With the utmost difficulty we made out that it was something to do with a kindergarten, in which there were plenty of children, and a very good method, but no furniture. It was, apparently, not the first time that the woman was here, for she expressed herself with great energy, and displayed not the slightest respect for the department.

"Confound them, they organize a whole town of kindergartens, and don't give us any furniture. What are the children to sit on, I ask! They told us—come today, you'll be given furniture. I've dragged my children three versts, and brought the carts, and there's nobody here, and no one to complain to. Disgraceful, I call it! I've been coming here a whole month. And look how much furniture she has herself—and what for, I ask you?"

Loud as the woman's voice was, none of those standing round Maria Kondratyevna's desk paid the slightest attention to her, very likely no one heard her, owing to the noise going on in the room. Kalina Ivanovich had a good look at the furniture, slapped the sofa with his hand, and asked:

"Am I right, Comrade, in considering that this furniture would suit you?"

"This furniture?" repeated the woman joyfully. "Why, this is lovely furniture!"

"What's the trouble, then?" said Kalina Ivanovich. "Since it suits you and is standing here useless, just take this furniture away for your children."

The eyes of the excited woman, hitherto fixed atten-

tively on Kalina Ivanovich's countenance, suddenly rolled in their sockets, and once again fixed themselves on Kalina Ivanovich.

"How?"

"Quite simply—take it away and put it on your carts."

"Good heavens—and then what?"

"If it's documents you're worrying about, take no notice—there'll be plenty of parasites to write you out more papers than you want yourself. Take it away!"

"And supposing they ask me—who shall I say gave me permission?"

"Say I allowed you."

"So you give me permission?"

"Yes—I do!"

"Good heavens!" groaned the woman ecstatically, and fluttered out of the room like a moth.

A moment later she fluttered back, this time accompanied by about a score of children. These flung themselves upon chairs, armchairs, little seats, and couches and, not without trouble, dragged them through the doors. The whole room was filled with the clatter they made, and at last Maria Kondratyevna became alive to it. She stood up at the desk and asked:

"What are you up to, there?"

"We're taking this out," said a dusky-skinned little chap, dragging a chair along with the help of a comrade.

"Can't you do it a little more quietly?" said Maria Kondratyevna, and once more plunged into her Department-of-Education affairs.

Kalina Ivanovich cast a glance of mock consternation in my direction.

"Did you ever see such a thing? The kids, the parasites, mean to carry off all the furniture!"

I had long been gazing with delight upon the abduction of Maria Kondratyevna's office furniture, and could not find it in my heart to be indignant. Two boys dragged at the sofa from beneath us, and we allowed them the fullest liberty to take it, too. The preoccupied woman, after describing the last few circles around her charges, ran up to Kalina Ivanovich, seized his hand, and pressed it with emotion, gazing lovingly into the smiling, embarrassed face of this noble individual.

"Do tell me your name! I must know. You've simply saved us!"

"What d'you want to know my name for? They don't offer prayers for the living any more, and it's a bit early to hold a burial service."

"Oh, but do tell me!"

"I don't like to be thanked, you know."

"Kalina Ivanovich Serdyuk is the name of this good man," I said with feeling.

"Thank you, Comrade Serdyuk, thank you!"

"You're welcome! But take it away as quick as you can, or someone might come and countermand everything."

The woman flew off on wings of ecstasy and gratitude. Kalina Ivanovich righted the belt of his greatcoat, cleared his throat, and lit his pipe.

"Why did you tell her? It was nice the way it was. I don't like it, you know, when people thank me too much. But I *should* like to know if they get away with it!"

In a short time Maria Kondratyevna's visitors dispersed themselves among the other rooms of the department, and we were given an audience, Maria Kondratyevna had soon done with us, and, glancing round absent-mindedly, wondered aloud:

"Where can they have taken that furniture, I should like to know! They've left me an empty office."

"They've taken it to a kindergarten," said Kalina Ivanovich gravely, leaning against the back of his chair.

It only came out two days later, quite by chance, that the furniture had been carried off with the permission of Kalina Ivanovich. We were summoned to the Department of Public Education, but we were in no hurry to go.

"I'm not going there about a lot of miserable chairs!" Kalina Ivanovich had said. "I've got enough troubles of my own!"

And so, for all these reasons, Kalina Ivanovich felt distinctly embarrassed in the presence of Maria Kondratyevna.

"We did a good deed. What does it matter?"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself? What right had you to give permission?"

Kalina Ivanovich turned courteously on his chair.

"I have the right to allow anything, just like any other man. I allow you, for instance, to buy yourself an estate, I allow you, and there's an end of it! Buy one! And take one for nothing, if you like, I allow you to do that, too!"

"But I, too, can give permission," said Maria Kondratyevna, glancing round. "Permission, let's say, to carry off all these stools and tables."

"You can!"

"And then?" insisted Maria Kondratyevna in some embarrassment.

"Then nothing!"

"D'you mean—just take them and carry them off?"

"And who'll take them?"

"Somebody or other."

"Oh-ho! Let him try! I'd like to see the state he'd be in himself when he takes them!"

"He wouldn't be able to drive, he'd have to be driven!" said Zadorov, smiling. He had been standing behind Maria Kondratyevna for a long time.

Maria Kondratyevna blushed, looked up at Zadorov, and asked awkwardly:

"Do you think so?"

Zadorov exposed all his teeth in a broad smile.

"That's how it seems to me," he said.

"A highwayman philosophy," said Maria Kondratyevna. "Is that the way you bring up your charges?" she said to me, severely.

"More or less."

"What sort of an upbringing do you call that? Taking furniture out of an office—is that right? What are you bringing them up to be? If things are lying about, it means you can take them—is that it?"

A group of colonists was listening to us, a lively interest in the conversation displaying itself on their faces. Maria Kondratyevna grew hot, and I could make out a note of suppressed hostility in her voice. I had no desire to continue the argument in this direction. I said peaceably:

"Let's talk this question out thoroughly, one day! After all, it's a very complicated one."

But Maria Kondratyevna would not give in.

"What's there complicated about it? It's very simple—yours is a kulak education."

Kalina Ivanovich realized that her irritation was serious, and seated himself closer to her.

"Don't get angry with an old man like me," he said. "Only you mustn't say that—kulak! Our pupils are Soviet-bred. Of course I was only joking. I thought: the owner is here, she'll laugh, and that's all, and perhaps it'll make her see that the children have no chairs. But the owner is a bad one—her furniture is carried off under her very nose, and now she's looking for the culprits—kulak education!"

"And your pupils would do the same, it means?" said Maria Kondratyevna, her resistance, however, weakening.

"Let them do the same!"

"But why?"

"To teach careless owners, that's why!"

Karabanov emerged from the crowd of colonists, and extended towards Maria Kondratyevna a stick, on which a snow-white handkerchief was tied—the colonists had all been given clean handkerchiefs in honour of the celebrations.

"It's no good, Maria Kondratyevna, you'd better raise the white flag!"

To my surprise, Maria Kondratyevna laughed and her eyes sparkled.

"I surrender, I surrender! You don't have kulak education, nobody swindled me, I surrender, the Ladies' Social Education surrenders!"

That evening, when, attired in someone else's leather jacket, I clambered out of the prompter's box, Maria Kondratyevna sat in the gradually emptying hall, observing attentively the last movements of the colonists. Toska Solovyov called out, in his high treble:

"Semyon, Semyon, have you given in your costume? Give in your costume before you go!"

He was answered by Karabanov's voice:

"Tosechka, you poor fool—I acted Satin!"*

"Oh, Satin! Then keep it as a souvenir."

* A character in mere rags from Gorky's *The Lower Depths*.—Tr.

Volokhov was standing at the edge of the stage and shouting into the dark:

"Galatenko, that won't do—the stove must be put out."

"It'll go out itself," replied Galatenko in his sleepy hoarse voice.

"Put it out, I tell you! You heard the order—the stoves mustn't be left burning."

"Order, order!" grumbled Galatenko. "I'll put it out."

A group of colonists on the stage were taking the doss house beds to pieces, and someone was humming the song from the play.

"These boards must go to the carpenters' shed tomorrow," Mitka Zhevely reminded somebody, and suddenly he shouted: "Anton! Hi, Anton!"

Bratchenko replied from the wings:

"Here I am! Don't bray—you're not an ass!"

"Will you give me a cart tomorrow?"

"All right!"

"And a horse?"

"Can't you draw it yourself?"

"Not strong enough!"

"Don't they feed you enough oats?"

"No!"

"Come to me—I'll give you plenty."

I approached Maria Kondratyevna.

"Where are you going to sleep?"

"I'm just waiting for Lydochka. She's removing her make-up, and then she'll take me to her room. Anton Semyonovich, your colonists are dears, but they work too hard. It's very late, and they're still working, and I can just imagine how tired they are. Can't you give them something to eat? Or at least the ones who have worked."

"They've all worked, and there isn't enough to go round."

"Well, then, you yourself and your teachers. You acted today, and it was ever so interesting. Why shouldn't you get together and sit and talk, and, well, and have a bite? Why not?"

"We have to get up at six, Maria Kondratyevna."

"Is that the only reason?"

"It's like this," I said to this dear good woman. "Our life is much tougher than you think. Much tougher!"

Maria Kondratyevna meditated. Lydochka jumped down from the stage, saying:

"It was a good performance today, wasn't it?"

6

CUPID'S ARROWS

Spring set in with our Gorky celebrations. But there was a particular sphere in which we had long been feeling the awakening of spring.

Our theatrical activities did much to create contacts between the members of the colony and the village youth, and at certain points of contact, emotions and plans not provided for by social-educational theories revealed themselves. The colonists posted by the will of the Commanders' Council in the most dangerous places—6-S Mixed, in which the letter "S" stood eloquently for the word "spectators"—were the greatest sufferers.

Those colonists who performed on the stage as members of 6-A Mixed (actors) were inevitably sucked in by the "poisonous quagmire" of the theatre. They frequently experienced, on the stage, moments of romantic uplift, and experienced, too, stage love, but precisely because of this they were spared for a certain time the throes of so-called first love. The members of the other 6-Mixed detachments were protected by equally helpful elements. In 6-SE Mixed, the boys were always handling violent explosives, and Taranets was hardly ever without a bandaged head, owing to injuries sustained during his innumerable pyrotechnical experiments. In this mixed detachment, too, love seemed to take no root, for the deafening noise made by exploding steamers, bastions, and ministers' carriages enthralled the hearts of its members, and the "sullen, smouldering flames of passion" could find no place there. Nor could these flames burn in the bosoms of boys moving furniture and scenery—the process which the pedagogues love to call "sublimation" being too strongly developed in their case. Even the heating detachment, whose activities were carried on in the very thick of the audience, were protected from

the arrows of Cupid, for no Cupid, however gay and irresponsible, would have dreamed of aiming at these coal-smearred, smoke-grimed, black-faced figures.

It was the members of 6-S Mixed who were in the greatest danger. These would go about among the public in the best suits the colony had, and I would rate them for the slightest sign of slovenliness. The corner of a clean handkerchief peeped out coquettishly from their breast pockets, their hair was always a model of elegance, they had to be as courteous as diplomats, and as attentive as dentists. And, thus equipped, they easily fell victims to the spell of those charms which they know almost as well how to prepare in the villages of Goncharovka, Pirogovka, and the farmstead of Volovy, as they do in Parisian beauty parlours.

The first meetings at the door of our theatre during the checking of tickets and the search for places were innocuous: the masters and organizers of these marvellous performances, with their moving words and their miracles of technique, seemed to the girls fascinating and remote, almost inaccessible, so much so, indeed, that the village Romeos themselves, sharing this admiration, did not suffer the pangs of jealousy. But another performance came round, and another, and another, and the story that is as old as the world was repeated.

Paraska of Pirogovka or Marusya of the Volovy farmstead soon discovered that the combination of rosy cheeks, shining eyes, eyebrows dark or fair, and a print dress of dazzling newness and fashionable cut, together with the almost Italian music of the Ukrainian "l," as produced by girlish lips, was infinitely more potent than the Gorkyites' scenic skill, or any technique whatsoever. And when all this was put into action, nothing was left of the inaccessibility of the colonists. There came a time when a colonist came to me after a performance with the insincere request:

"Anton Semyonovich, may I see the girls from Pirogovka home—they're afraid to go alone."

Such a phrase was a rare conglomeration of lies, since, both the suppliant and myself knew very well that nobody was afraid of anything, and nobody needed to be seen home, and the plural number—"girls"—was a gross

exaggeration. Besides, no permission was required. At a pinch the escort of the timid spectator would be carried out without permission.

For these reasons I gave permission, suppressing in the depths of my pedagogical soul a distinct sensation of discrepancy. Pedagogics, as is well known, flatly denies love, considering that this "dominant" only comes up when education methods have proved a failure. In all times, and among all peoples, pedagogues have detested love. I, too, felt a jealous displeasure when some colonist, missing a Komsomol or general meeting, contemptuously throwing down his book, neglecting all the qualities of an active and class-conscious member of a collective, refused obstinately to recognize any other authority but that of a Marusya or a Natasha—beings immeasurably beneath me in pedagogical, political or moral respects. But I believed in thinking things over, and was in no hurry to claim rights of any sorts for my jealousy. My comrades in the colony, and still more the workers in the Department of Public Education, were more resolute than I was, and were greatly irritated by the unforeseen and unprovided-for intervention of Cupid.

"This must be resolutely opposed."

These discussions were always a help, for they threw light on the situation: one must depend on one's own common sense and the common sense of life. Dreaming was no good. If we were rich, I would marry off the colonists, and populate our neighbourhood with married Komsomols. What harm would there be in that? But it was a long way to such a consummation. Never mind! Even a poor life can offer suggestions. I did not persecute the lovelorn with pedagogical interference, the more so that they never exceeded the bounds of propriety. In a moment of frankness Oprishko showed me a photograph of Marusya—obvious proof that life was getting on with the business, while we were still meditating.

In itself, the photograph told little. A broad, snub-nosed face looked out at me, adding nothing to the average Marusya type. But on the other side was written in an expressive schoolgirl's hand: "To dear Dmitri from Marusya Lukashenko. When this you see, remember me!"

Dmitri Oprishko sat there on his chair, openly exhibiting himself to the whole world as a lost soul. There were only a few miserable traces left of his once sprightly bearing, even the jaunty forelock had disappeared from his head, and was virtuously and neatly flattened down. His brown eyes, formerly lighting up so quickly at a witty word, or at a chance for romping and laughing, now expressed nothing but peaceable domestic cares. and submission to a tender fate.

"What d'you mean to do?"

Oprishko smiled.

"It'll be hard without your help. We haven't told her father anything yet. Marusya's afraid. But her father likes me all right—in a general way."

"Very well—we'll wait and see!"

Oprishko went away, quite satisfied, carefully hiding the portrait of his beloved against his breast.

The plight of Chobot was still sadder. He was a gloomy passionate individual, without a single distinctive trait. He had signalized his entry into the colony by a conflict involving the use of knives, but had since then steadily submitted to discipline, though always holding aloof from the seething centres of our life. He had an inexpressive, colourless countenance, vacant-looking even in moments of anger. He attended school under compulsion, and learned to read with the utmost difficulty. But I liked his mode of expression—a sort of great and simple rightness always made itself felt in his spare utterances. He was one of the first to be received into the Komsomol organization. Koval had a definite opinion of him:

"He'll never be able to give lectures, and he won't do for propaganda work, but give him a machine gun, and he'll die before he lets go off it!"

The whole colony knew that Chobot was passionately in love with Natasha Petrenko. Natasha lived in the home of Moussi Karpovich, ostensibly as his niece, but in reality as a simple farm hand. Moussi Karpovich did allow her to go to the theatre, but she was very poorly clad: a badly fitting skirt worn out long ago by someone else, gnarled boots, not her size, and an old-fashioned, dark, pleated blouse. We never saw her in any other attire. Such clothing made a pitiful scarecrow of Natasha, but this only

brought out the attractiveness of her face. From the rust-coloured aureole of a tattered, soiled shawl there looked out, not so much a face, as the highest embodiment of innocence and purity, and a kind of childlike smiling confidence. Natasha never pulled faces, never expressed anger, indignation, suspicion, or grief. All she could do was to listen earnestly, her thick black lashes quivering almost imperceptibly the while, or to smile frankly and attentively, showing delightful small teeth, with one of the front ones slightly awry.

Natasha always came to the colony with a flock of girls, and was conspicuous against the affected boisterousness of this background by her simple, childlike reserve and good spirits.

Chobot invariably went to meet her; sitting glumly beside her on a bench, he was unable to embarrass her, or make any change in her inner life. I could not believe that this child was capable of loving Chobot, but the boys contradicted me in unison:

"Who? Natasha? Why, she'd go through fire and water for Chobot without a moment's hesitation!"

As a matter of fact we did not have much time to indulge in love affairs just then. The season was upon us when the sun would start its annual offensive, blazing away eighteen hours a day. Sherre, too, as if imitating the sun, imposed so much work upon us that we could only puff and pant wordlessly, remembering ruefully that only the previous autumn we had approved his sowing plan with great enthusiasm at the general meeting. Officially Sherre was supposed to have a six-field crop rotation system, but in reality it was a much more complicated affair. Sherre sowed hardly any grain crops. He had about seven hectares of winter wheat, besides a smallish field sown with oats and barley in some remote part of the estate, and he kept a bit of land for experimental purposes; on this plot he had sown some unheard-of species of rye, which, he declared, would keep the peasants guessing, for they would never recognize it as rye. So far it was we and not the peasants who were puzzled. Potatoes, beet, melons, cabbage, a veritable plantation of peas sprang up in many varieties, very hard to distinguish from one another. The boys used to say

that Sherre was spreading a regular counterrevolution in the fields.

"He has kings, tsars, and queens all over the place!" they would say.

And indeed, Sherre, dividing all the plots by ideally straight boundary lines and hedges, used to stick small boards on wooden posts, with an inscription on each board to show what was sown and how much. The colonists, probably those who protected the crops from cows, one morning stuck their own signboards next to Sherre's, a trick which wounded Sherre grievously. He demanded an emergency Commanders' Council, and—a most unaccustomed thing from him—shouted at us.

"Sheer nonsense and tomfoolery! I name the varieties the way they're always named. If a variety is called 'King of Andalusia,' that's its name all over the world, and I can't think up names for myself. It's simply hooliganism! Why did they have to butt in with their General Beet, Colonel Pea, and their Captain Melon and Lieutenant Tomato?"

The commanders smiled, not quite knowing how to deal with vegetable battalions. They asked in a businesslike way:

"Who's responsible for this silly trick? First they're kings, and then just captains and God knows what?"

The boys could not help smiling, although they stood in a certain awe of Sherre. Silanti understood the tenseness of the conflict, and endeavoured to relieve it.

"It's like this, you see: a king that can be eaten, as they say, by cows, can't be dangerous—let him remain king."

Kalina Ivanovich, too, sided with Sherre:

"What's the row about? You want to show that you're true revolutionaries, you want to fight the kings, to cut off the heads of the parasites—is that it? Don't worry—we'll give you each a knife, and you shall cut away till you're all of a sweat."

The colonists knew what this meant, and accepted the declaration of Kalina Ivanovich with profound submission. With this, the matter of counterrevolution in our fields came to an end, and when Sherre transplanted two hundred rosebushes in front of the main building, with

the inscription "Snow Queen," not a single colonist raised a protest. Karabanov merely said:

"Queen or not, it doesn't matter, so long as she smells nice."

It was the beet that gave us the most trouble. Candidly speaking, this is a obnoxious crop—easy enough to sow, but maddening to look after. Hardly does it show itself, with slow languor, above ground when it has to be weeded. The first weeding of beet is a tragedy. Young beet cannot be distinguished by a novice from a weed, and Sherre demanded senior colonists for this weeding, while these same seniors expostulated:

"What—weed the beet? Haven't we done enough weeding in our day?"

After the first weeding comes the second. The thoughts of all are turning towards cabbages and peas, and the time for haymaking is in the offing, when, lo and behold! Sherre calmly writes in his Sunday application: "forty persons for weeding the beet."

Vershnev, the secretary of the Council, reads this cool request to himself indignantly, and bangs with his fist on the table.

"What's this? Again the beets? When will it be over, confound and blast it! Perhaps you've given in an old application by mistake?"

"A new application," said Sherre calmly. "Forty persons, and seniors, please."

Maria Kondratyevna, who had taken a hut for the summer in our neighbourhood, was present at the Council, and the dimples in her cheeks peeped out playfully at the indignant colonists.

"How lazy you are, you boys! But you like beetroot in borshch, I'm sure!"

Semyon bent his head and declaimed with expression:

"In the first place, it's fodder beet, confound it! In the second place, why don't you come and help us weed it? If you do us the favour of working just one day, then I promise to get up a mixed detachment to work at the beet until we finish the blasted thing!"

Maria Kondratyevna smiled at me for sympathy, motioning with her head at the colonists:

"Just look at them!"

Maria Kondratyevna was on leave, and so she could be met with in the colony during the daytime too. But in the daytime it was dull in the colony, the boys, grimy, dusty, tanned, only coming back for dinner. Throwing their hoes into Kudlaty's corner, they would leap from the steep shore with the impact of Budyonny's cavalry, unfastening their shorts on the way, till the Kolomak was alive with their heated bodies, shouts, games and pranks. The girls squealed from the bushes on the shore:

"Come on, you've had enough, go away now! Fellows! Hi, fellows! It's our turn now!"

The monitor would pace the shore with an anxious face, and the lads drawing the still warm shorts on to their wet limbs, with drops of water shining on their shoulders, would gather about the tables set around the fountain in the old garden. Here they had long been awaited by Maria Kondratyevna, the only person in the colony preserving a white human skin and unbleached curls. This made her seem extraordinarily well-groomed in our crowd, and even Kalina Ivanovich could not refrain from remarking it.

"A fine figure of a woman, you know—she's wasted here, Anton Semyonovich! You shouldn't look at her so theoretically! She regards you as a human being, and you pay her no attention, just as if you were some muzhik."

"For shame!" I said to Kalina Ivanovich. "The only thing lacking is for me to go in for love affairs in the colony."

"Go on with you!" said Kalina Ivanovich in his old man's croak, lighting his pipe. "Mark my words, you'll be left out in the cold!"

I had no time to go in for theoretical and practical analysis of Maria Kondratyevna's qualities, and perhaps for that very reason she kept inviting me to tea, and was so offended when I courteously assured her:

"But I don't like tea—really I don't!"

One day, after dinner, when the colonists had all gone off to their work, Maria Kondratyevna and I remained at the table, and she said to me with simple friendliness:

"Listen to me, Diogenes Semyonovich! If you don't come to me this evening I shall consider you very rude."

"What have you got? Tea?"

"I have ice cream, d'you understand, ice cream, not tea! I'm making it specially for you."

"All right," I said reluctantly. "What time shall I come for ice cream?"

"At eight."

"But I have to take the commanders' reports at half past eight."

"Now he's a martyr to pedagogics! Very well then—come at nine."

But at nine o'clock, immediately after the reports, when I was sitting in my office and regretting that I had to go for ice cream and had not time to shave, Mitka Zhevely came running up, crying out:

"Anton Semyonovich—come quick!"

"What's up?"

"The boys have brought Chobot and Natasha. That grandpa—Moussi Karpovich, you know...."

"Where are they?"

"Over there, in the garden."

I hastened to the garden. On a bench in the alley of lilacs was the terrified Natasha, surrounded by a crowd of our girls and women. The boys formed groups all down the alley, discussing something eagerly. Karabanov was holding forth:

"And quite right! A pity he did not kill the swine!"

Zadorov was trying to soothe the trembling, weeping Chobot.

"It's not so terrible! Here's Anton—he'll set everything right."

Interrupting one another, they told me the following story.

Moussi Karpovich had decided to punish Natasha, perhaps for forgetting to dry some squares of homespun, or something of that sort, and had already struck her twice with the reins when, just at that moment, Chobot came in. It was hard to discover exactly what Chobot had done—Chobot was silent—but neighbours from the farmstead, and some of our colonists, had come running

at the sound of Moussi's cries and found the latter in a state of collapse, covered with blood, huddled terrified in a corner. One of Moussi Karpovich's sons was in an equally distressing condition. Chobot himself was standing in the middle of the hut, and in the words of Karabanov, snarling like a dog. Natasha was found later in the hut of a neighbour.

All this had led to certain negotiations between the colonists and the farmstead folk. Signs were not wanting that in the process of these negotiations fists and certain other forms of defence had not been neglected, but the boys said nothing of this, only narrating with dramatic emotion:

"We didn't do anything special, we just gave—er—first-aid after the accidents, and Karabanov said to Natasha: 'You come to the colony, Natasha, don't you be afraid, you'll find good people in the colony, you know, we'll see to all this.'"

I invited all the participants in this affair into my office.

Natasha gazed seriously from wide-open eyes at surroundings so novel to her, and the traces of her fear could only have been discerned in imperceptible movements of her lips, and in one hot tear gradually cooling on her cheek.

"What's to be done?" said Karabanov vehemently. "This business has got to be settled!"

"Let's settle it then!" I said.

"Marry them!" proposed Burun.

"There'll be plenty of time to marry them," I replied. "That's not what we have to do just now. We have a perfect right to take Natasha into the colony. Does anyone object? Quiet, now—don't shout so! We have room for the girl. Kolya, enter her in tomorrow's order for the fifth detachment."

"Very good!" barked Kolka.

Natasha suddenly flung off her dingy shawl, and her eyes blazed like flames in the wind. She ran up to me, laughing joyfully, as only children laugh.

"Really-truly? In the colony? Oh, thank you, Uncle!"

The boys covered their emotion with laughter. Karabanov stamped on the floor:

"How simple! So simple. . . damn it all. . . in the colony, of course! Just let them try and touch a colonist!"

The girls joyfully carried Natasha off to the bedroom. The boys went on chattering for a long time. Chobot, who was sitting opposite me, tried to thank me.

"I would never have believed it! Thank you for defending such an insignificant person! And as for getting married—that can wait!"

We discussed the occurrence late into the night. The boys cited similar cases, Silanti gave his opinion, and Natasha was brought to be shown to me in colonist attire, no bride, but just a tender little maiden. Last of all Kalina Ivanovich came in and summed up the evening's events as follows:

"There's nothing to make a fuss about! So long as you haven't cut a man's head off, he's alive, and so everything's all right. Come to the fields—you'll see for yourself! Those kulaks are as meek as Moses, now—they couldn't be quieter than they will be when they're dead and in their coffins."

It was past midnight when Kalina Ivanovich and I set out for the meadows. The warm still night seemed to be listening attentively to Kalina Ivanovich's words. The poplars, taut, spruce, faithful to their long-standing passion for keeping rank, kept watch over our colony, thinking their own thoughts. Perhaps they were astonished at the changes which had taken place all around them. They had originally drawn up to form a guard for the Trepkes, and now they were expected to keep watch over the Maxim Gorky Colony.

Maria Kondratyevna's hut, from the midst of a grove of poplars, looked straight at us from its darkened eyes. Suddenly one of its windows opened quietly, and someone jumped out of it. He started in our direction, but stopped for a moment, and plunged into the woods. Kalina Ivanovich broke off in his description of the evacuation of Mirgorod in 1918, and said quietly:

"That's Karabanov, the parasite! He's practical, you see, not merely theoretical. And you—an educated man—are left out in the cold."

7

REINFORCEMENTS

When Moussi Karpovich came to the colony we thought he intended to haul us over the coals regarding the liberties which the infuriated Chobot had taken with his head. The aforesaid head was, indeed, demonstratively bandaged, and Moussi Karpovich spoke more like a dying swan than his usual self. But he referred to the subject of such disturbing interest to us in a spirit of peace and Christian resignation.

"Don't think it's about the wench I've come! It's something quite different. God forbid I should quarrel with you—why should I quarrel with you? What for? Let things be the way they are.... It's about the mill I've come. I've brought you a nice proposition from the Village Soviet."

Koval bent his brows upon Moussi Karpovich.

"About the mill?"

"Why, yes! You're trying to get the mill—for rent, I mean, and the Village Soviet has sent in an application, too. So this is what we think—you're just as much a Soviet authority as the Village Soviet is. There can't be any question of *you* on one side, and *us* on the other."

"Aha!" exclaimed Koval somewhat ironically.

A brief diplomatic interlude then ensued. I persuaded Koval and the other lads to invest their souls in diplomatic attire and white ties, and Luka Semyonovich and Moussi Karpovich were enabled to make their appearance at the colony without endangering their lives.

At that time the whole colony was greatly preoccupied with the question of buying horses. Our famous trotters were visibly ageing, even Red had begun to grow a beard, while the Commanders' Council had already given Laddie invalid status and pensioned him off. He was allotted a place in the colony and an oat ration for the remainder of his days, and could only be put into harness with my personal consent. Sherre had always been scornful of Bandit, Mary, and Falcon.

"A good farm has good horses," he would say, "and if the horses are no good, the farm is no good, either."

Even Anton Bratchenko, who had been through the stage of infatuation with each of our horses in turn, but preferred Red to them all, began, under the influence of Sherre, to worship some future steed which he expected to turn up in our domain any moment. Among us, Sherre, Kalina Ivanovich and Bratchenko, and myself never missed a fair; we inspected thousands of horses, without having, so far, bought a single one. Sometimes the horses would be no better than our own, sometimes too high a price would be set on them, in yet other cases, Sherre discovered some carefully concealed defect or disease in them. And the truth must be told—horses of good quality were not to be found at a fair. War and revolution had worked havoc with the better strains, and new stud farms had not yet come into being. Anton would return from a fair in a state bordering on fury.

“How can it be? Aren’t there any horses? And supposing we need a decent horse! Are we to go cap in hand to the bourgeois folk, or what?”

In his capacity of an old hussar, Kalina Ivanovich was fond of delving deep into the horse problem, and even Sherre, in this one instance relaxing from his state of permanent jealousy, believed in Kalina Ivanovich’s erudition. One day, in a circle of experts, Kalina Ivanovich declared:

“Those parasites Luka and Moussi say that the muzhiks in the farmsteads have fine horses, but they don’t take them to the fairs—they’re afraid.”

“Nothing of the sort,” said Sherre. “They haven’t any decent horses. Only ones like those we’ve seen. Soon we’ll be able to get fine horses from the stud farms, but it’s a bit early for that yet.”

“I tell you they have,” insisted Kalina Ivanovich. “Luka knows—that son-of-a-bitch knows the whole district, and everything that goes on in it. And when you come to think of it, where is good stock to be found if not among the practical farmers? And the practical farmers live in the farmsteads! He lies low, the parasite, and rears a colt on the sly, because—the dirty skunk!—he’s afraid it’ll be taken from him. But if we go to one of them ourselves, maybe we’ll be able to buy a horse.”

I, too, tackled the problem without troubling in the least about ideology.

"We'll go next Sunday and have a look," I said. "And perhaps we'll buy something."

"Why not?" agreed Sherre. "We won't buy a horse, of course, but it'll be a good thing to drive somewhere. I should like to see what kind of crops these practical farmers have got."

On Sunday we harnessed our horses to the phaeton, and rolled gently over the soft dirt roads which united the villages. We passed Goncharovka, cut across the Kharkov highroad, went at a foot-pace through a sandy-bottomed pine wood, till we reached a "far-away country" in which we had never been before.

From the top of a high slope a fair-seeming prospect could be descried. Before us there stretched out endlessly to the horizon a plain which seemed to have been gone over with a steam-roller. It was not remarkable for variety, but in this very monotony may have lain its principal charm. The plain was thickly sown with corn; all around were rolling waves—golden, greenish-gold, golden-tawny—varied here and there by the bright green of millet, or the dimpled surface of a field of buckwheat. And against this golden background, with almost painful regularity, were ranged groups of snow-white huts, surrounded by low-lying, formless garden plots. Each group had its two or three willows, asps, more rarely poplars, and its melon bed, complete with dingy brown shack. All was in conformity with the strictest style—the most exacting landscape painter could not have discovered one false stroke.

This picture was greatly to the taste of Kalina Ivanovich, too.

"Look how the kulaks live! They're orderly folk here!"

"Yes," admitted Sherre reluctantly.

"Let's drop in on that one over there," proposed Kalina Ivanovich.

Anton turned into a pathway trodden in the grass and drove up to a primitive gateway, composed of three slender willow trunks spliced together with bast. A mangy grey cur crawled from beneath a bench, stretching its limbs, and barked at us with lazy huskiness. The owner

of the hut emerged, brushing something out of his unkempt beard, and regarding my quasi-military attire with astonishment not unmixed with anxiety.

"Good day, master!" said Kalina Ivanovich cheerfully. "Just back from church, I suppose?"

"I don't often go to church," replied the master of the house, in a voice as lazily husky as that of the guardian of his property. "My wife goes now and then. And where may you be from?"

"We've come on business. They say you have a nice horse for sale—is it true?"

The master's eyes travelled over our turnout. The fact that Red and black Mary were an ill-matched pair seemed to allay his anxiety somewhat.

"I don't know about that. How can I have nice horses? I *have* a horse—a three-year-old. Perhaps it would suit you?"

He went to the stable and led from its farthest corner a three-year-old mare, sprightly and well-fed.

"Never been in harness?" inquired Sherre.

"She's never been harnessed to go anywhere special, but as to driving—she can go in harness. She's a good one to go, I will say that!"

"She won't do," said Sherre. "She's too young for us. We need a working horse."

"She's young, of course," agreed the owner. "But she'd grow in a good home. That she would! I've been tending her three years. I've tended her well, you can see that, can't you?"

The mare was certainly in good condition; with her clean, gleaming skin and well-combed mane, she was infinitely better groomed than her trainer and owner.

"And how much would you be asking for such a mare, eh?"

"Seeing that it's practical folks who want to buy her—sixty chervonets, and a good treat thrown in."

Anton fixed his gaze on the summit of a willow, and, at last getting the point, fairly gasped.

"How much? Six hundred rubles?"

"That's right—six hundred," said the owner modestly.

"Six hundred rubles for muck like that!" shouted Anton, unable to restrain his indignation.

"Muck yourself—a fat lot you know about it!" retorted the owner. "Try the horse—then judge!"

"It can't be said that the mare is muck," said Kalina Ivanovich pacifically. "She's a good mare, but she won't do for us."

Sherre smiled in silence. We all went back to the phaeton, and drove on. The grey dog once more yelped its respects to us, but its master, closing his gate, did not so much as look after us.

We visited a dozen or so farmsteads. There was a horse at almost every one of them, but we made no purchase.

It was almost evening before we got home. Sherre, who seemed to have lost interest in the fields, was absorbed in thought. Anton wreaked his irritation on Red, and kept flicking at him with the whip, muttering:

"Are you crazy? Have you never seen weeds before? I'll show you!"

Angrily watching the wormwood growing beside the road, Kalina Ivanovich kept up a grumbling monologue all the way.

"Look what bad people they are, the parasites! People come to them—well, whether you sell or whether you don't, you can at least behave like a human being, like a host, you swine! You can see, you parasite, that people have been travelling since the morning, you might offer them something to eat—you've got some borshch, haven't you, or at least potatoes. . . . Just fancy, he can't find time to comb his beard—did you ever see the like? And asking six hundred rubles for a scurvy nag! *He* 'tended the horse,' forsooth! It wasn't he who tended it—did you notice what a lot of labourers he has?"

I had seen them—the tatterdemalions—standing motionless by stable and pigsty, in awe-struck, tense observation of so extraordinary a spectacle as the arrival of townsfolk. They were overwhelmed by the fantastic combination of so much respectability in one yard. Sometimes one of these mute personages would lead a horse from its stable, shyly handing the reins to the master, or even give a pat to a horse's hindquarters, perhaps seeking thus to express affection for a familiar fellow creature.

At last Kalina Ivanovich fell silent, pulling irritably at his pipe. He only broke silence at the very entrance to the colony, when he cried cheerfully:

"Starved us to death, the damned parasites!"

At the colony we found Luka Semyonovich and Moussi Karpovich. Luka was amazed at the unsuccess of our expedition.

"It can't be!" he protested. "Well—since it was I who told Anton Semyonovich and Kalina Ivanovich about it, we shall have to see to this business ourselves. Don't you worry, Kalina Ivanovich! You'll ruin your nerves, and that's the worst thing that can happen to a man! It's bad for you to upset yourself. Next week you and I will go, but let Anton Semyonovich stay at home, he looks too—tee-hee!—Bolshevik! It frightens the kulaks!"

Next Sunday Kalina Ivanovich and Luka Semyonovich set out for the farmsteads in Luka's carriage. Bratchenko, who regarded the whole business with a kind of desperate indifference, speeded him with the maliciously facetious words:

"Mind you take bread with you, or you'll die of hunger!"

Luka Semyonovich smoothed his gorgeous red beard over the front of his embroidered Sunday blouse, his red lips curving in an anticipatory smile.

"Comrade Bratchenko, how can you! We're going visiting, how can we take bread with us? There'll be real borshch today, and mutton, and maybe somebody will provide a bottle of something."

He winked at the deeply interested Kalina Ivanovich, and gathered up the smart crimson reins. The broad-chested, well-nourished stallion started off gaily beneath the straddling shaft bow, setting the heavy carriage in motion.

In the evening, all the colonists turned out as if at a fire alarm, to survey a surprising spectacle—Kalina Ivanovich returning in triumph. Luka Semyonovich's stallion was tied to the back of the carriage, and between the shafts was a beautiful big mare, dapple-grey. Both Kalina Ivanovich and Luka Semyonovich bore in their persons evidence of the hospitality which had been accorded them by horse owners. Kalina Ivanovich could

hardly get out of the carriage, but did his utmost to prevent the colonists from noticing his condition. Karabanov helped him to descend.

"So there *was* treating?"

"Of course there was! See what a fine beast we've brought!"

Kalina Ivanovich stroked the mare's huge hindquarters. It was indeed a fine beast, with its powerful, fringed legs, its vast stature, its Herculean chest, and well-knit, massive frame. Even Sherre could find no defects in it, though he spent a long time crawling under its belly, every now and then saying with kind gaiety:

"Your foot—give me your foot!"

The boys approved of the purchase. Burun, narrowing his eyes gravely, walked all round the mare, and then announced:

"At last there's a horse that really *is* a horse in this colony!"

Karabanov, too, liked the mare.

"Yes, that's a working horse," he said. "It's worth five hundred rubles. With a dozen horses like that we could eat pie."

Bratchenko received the mare with loving attention, walked all round it, giving vent to his satisfaction by clicking with his tongue, joyfully astounded by its vast, quiet power, its peaceful, confiding nature. New horizons opened before Bratchenko. He pestered Sherre with the insistent demand:

"Now we need a good sire. We could have our own stud—you know what I mean."

Sherre knew perfectly well what he meant. Casting a grave appraising glance at Dawn (that was the horse's name) he said through closed teeth:

"I'll look for a stallion. I've got my eye on a certain place. Just wait till we harvest the wheat, then I'll go there."

At this time, from early morn to sunset, work went on in the colony with rhythmic strokes on the smooth rails laid down with such precision by Sherre. The mixed detachments, some big, some small, some consisting of seniors, some composed purposely of younger boys alone,

armed with hoes, with scythes, with rakes, or merely with their own two hands, went into the fields and back again with the regularity of an express-train schedule, alive with laughter and joking, with cheerfulness and self-confidence, thoroughly aware what was to be done, and where and how to do it. Occasionally Olya Voronova, our assistant agronomist, would return from the fields, saying to the monitor on duty, between sips of water from the mug kept in the office:

"Send help to Mixed Five."

"What's up?"

"They're behind with the binding. It's awfully hot!"

"How many are needed?"

"About five. Are there any girls free?"

"Only one."

Olya, wiping her lips on her sleeve, would disappear somewhere. The monitor, notebook in hand, would make for the pear tree, beneath which, since the early morning, had been posted the staff of the mixed detachment's reserve. The commander on duty would be followed by the bugler on duty at a quaint, short trot. In another minute would be heard the brief staccato of the call for reserves. From beneath bushes, from the river, from the bedrooms, the little ones would rush headlong, a circle would be formed beneath the pear tree, and a minute later five colonists would be making for the wheat field at a quick march.

We had already taken in the forty new children. The colonists spent a whole Sunday looking after them, washing them, dressing them, and assigning them to their respective detachments. We did not increase the number of detachments, but transferred the whole eleven detachments to the Red House, leaving a definite number of places to be filled in in each. This enabled the newcomers to get themselves firmly knit up with the ranks of the original members, so that they were proudly conscious of being Gorkyites, even though as yet they could not march properly, but could only, in the words of Karabanov, toddle.

The newcomers were all very young, not more than thirteen or fourteen years old, and among them were delightful faces, especially charming after a little chap

came rosy from the bath, clad in shining new sateen shorts. His hair might not yet have been properly cut, but Belukhin reassured us:

"They cut their hair themselves, today, and you know they're not exactly dabs. The hairdresser will be here tonight, and we'll have them all properly turned out."

The reinforcements walked about the colony with eyes bulging with amazement for the first day or so, taking in all the new impressions. They visited the hog-house, and gazed in astonishment at the stern Stupitsyn.

Anton refused on principle to have anything to do with the reinforcements.

"What are you all doing here? Your place is in the dining room, still."

"Why in the dining room?"

"What else are you fit for? You're nothing but machines for eating."

"Oh, I'm going to work!"

"I know the way you'll work! It'll take two overseers to look after you. Won't it, now?"

"But the commander said we were to start work the day after tomorrow. You'll see!"

"I'll see, will I? D'you think I don't know? It'll be—'Oh, how hot I am! Oh, how I'm longing for a drink of water! Oh, papa! Oh, mama!'"

The little chaps would smile in embarrassment.

"Mama! Mama! Nothing of the sort!"

But by the end of the very first day Bratchenko had found his favourites. He picked out horse lovers according to a system of his own. And, lo and behold! The water barrel is trundling over the field path, and on the barrel is perched a new Gorkyte—Petya Zadorozhny, driving Falcon, to the accompaniment of injunctions from the stable door:

"Don't drive the horse too hard, now—you're not going to a fire with that barrel!"

In a day's time the newcomers were taking part in mixed detachments, stumbling and croaking in their unfamiliar, laborious efforts, but there is a row of colonists stubbornly moving up the potato field, and hardly ever breaking the line, and it seems to the newcomer that he, too, can keep his place in the line. It is an hour before

he realizes that only one row has been assigned to two beginners, whereas the veterans have a row each. Sweating profusely, he quietly asks his neighbour:

"Will it soon be over?"

The wheat has been taken in, and work is beginning on the threshing floor. Sherre, covered, like everyone else, with dirt and sweat, checks the gears and inspects the stacks prepared for threshing.

"We'll start threshing the day after tomorrow—and tomorrow we'll go for the horse."

"I'll go," said Semyon, darting a surreptitious glance at Bratchenko.

"Go on then," said Anton. "Is it a good stallion?"

"Not a bad stallion," replied Sherre.

"Did you buy it at the sovkhos?"

"Yes. At the sovkhos."

"How much?"

"Three hundred."

"That wasn't much."

"Um'hm."

"A Soviet horse, then!" said Kalina Ivanovich. "What d'you want to make that elevator so high for?" he added, looking at the thresher.

"A Soviet horse," replied Sherre. "It's not too high, the straw's very light."

On Sunday everyone rested, bathed, went rowing, and busied themselves with the newcomers, and in the evening, as usual, the aristocracy gathered together under the porch of the main building, inhaling the fragrance of the "snow queens," and profoundly impressing, with many a varied tale, the newcomers, who stood silently at a respectful distance.

Suddenly, from round the corner of the mill, in a cloud of dust, a rider, his horse shying violently at an old boiler lying in the way, came up at a gallop. Semyon flew right up to us on a golden steed, and we all suddenly fell silent, holding our breath. Before this we had only seen such a sight in pictures, in illustrations to fairy tales and to Gogol's *Terrible Revenge*. The horse bore Semyon at a pace which was at once easy and powerful, swinging its thick, luxurious tail, its mane—fluffy, glinting with a golden tinge—streaming in the wind. It moved so fast

that our awe-struck minds could scarcely keep up with its ever-new and overwhelming points—the powerful neck, with its proud and playful turn, the slender legs approaching with so generous a stride.

Semyon reined in the horse in front of us, bringing the beautiful, small head close to its chest. The eye, coal-black, young and ardent, with fiery corners, suddenly shot a glance straight into the heart of the swooning Anton Bratchenko. Anton clapped his hands to his ears, gasped, and shuddered.

“Is that ours? Is it? The stallion? Ours?”

“Ours,” said Semyon proudly.

“Get the hell off the stallion!” Anton suddenly yelled at Karabanov. “Are you going to sit there forever? Haven’t you had enough? Look what a lather you’ve got him in! This isn’t one of your kulak nags!”

Anton seized the rein, repeating his command with a glance of fury. Semyon climbed out of the saddle.

“That’s all right, old man,” he said. “I understand. If there ever was such a horse before, it must have belonged to Napoleon.”

Anton flew into the saddle like a gust of wind, gently stroking the horse’s neck. Then, in sudden embarrassment, he turned aside, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

The boys laughed softly. Kalina Ivanovich smiled, cleared his throat, smiled again.

“There’s no denying it,” he said. “It’s a grand horse. I’ll say more—it’s too good for us. We’ll ruin it.”

“Who will?” cried Anton, bending fiercely towards him. Then he turned to the colonists.

“I’ll kill you!” he growled. “I’ll kill anyone who touches him! I’ll take a stick to you! I’ll bash you over the head with a crowbar!”

He turned the horse sharply round, and it bore him meekly to the stable, with mincing, coquettish steps, as if glad that at last a real master was in the saddle.

We called the horse “Molodets.”*

* Fine fellow.—*Tr.*

8

THE NINTH AND TENTH DETACHMENTS

In the beginning of July we got a three-year lease of the mill, at an annual rent of three thousand rubles. It was put entirely at our disposal, free of any partnership whatever.

Our diplomatic relations with the Village Soviet were again severed, and the days of the Village Soviet itself—in its present membership—were numbered. The acquisition of the mill was the victory of our own Komso-mol organization, on the second sector of the fighting front.

Almost to our own surprise the colony was becoming appreciably richer, and acquiring the style of a solid, well-regulated enterprise.

Only a short time before the purchase of a couple of horses had been a strain on our resources, but by the middle of the summer we were well able to assign fairly large sums for cows of good breed, a flock of sheep, and new furniture.

And Sherre, scarcely burdening our budget, had quietly embarked upon the construction of a new cowshed, and almost before we had time to turn round, there was a new building, at once handsome and solid, on one side of the yard, in front of which Sherre laid out flower beds, thus making mincemeat of the notion that a cowshed is a place of dirt and smells. In the new cowshed stood five Simmenthal cows, while one of our own calves, to the general astonishment, and even to that of Sherre, had suddenly developed into a bull known as Caesar, whose extraordinary display of points fairly dazzled us.

Sherre had great difficulty in getting a certificate for Caesar, but his Simmenthal points were so obvious that in the end one was issued. Molodets had a certificate too, and another certificated member of our farmyard was Vasili Ivanovich, a sixteen-pood hog, which I had brought to the colony some time back, from the experimental station—a thoroughbred English hog, named after Trepke the elder.

With these distinguished foreigners as a nucleus it had become easier to start building up pedigreed stock.

The domain of the tenth detachment—the hog-house—had become, under the command of Stupitsyn, a very important establishment, in output and purity of breed ranking second only to the experimental station.

Fourteen strong, the tenth detachment always worked in an exemplary manner. The hog-house was one of those places in the colony as to which no one for a moment entertained the slightest doubt. A splendid Trepke construction of hollow concrete, it stood in the middle of our yard, forming its geometrical centre, but it was so shiny and imposing that it never entered into anyone's head to consider its situation a profanation of the Gorky Colony.

Very few colonists were allowed into it, although newcomers were admitted as members of excursions. In the ordinary way, a pass signed by myself or Sherre was required to get in. And so, in the eyes of the colonists and villagers, the work of the tenth detachment was fraught with mystery, the initiation into which was regarded as a special honour.

Admission to the "waiting room" was comparatively easy to obtain, requiring only the permission of Stupitsyn, the commander of the tenth detachment. Here dwelt baby pigs intended for sale, and here, also, the village sows were brought for coupling.

The fee for coupling was three rubles, for which Ovcharenko, Stupitsyn's assistant and cashier, gave a receipt. And in the waiting room baby pigs were sold at a fixed price by the kilogram, although the peasants endeavoured to convince us that it was ridiculous to sell pigs by weight, that such a thing was unheard-of.

There was always a rush of visitors to the waiting room during farrowing time, for Sherre never kept more than seven pigs from every litter—the first-born and the biggest—giving away most of the others free to pig lovers. Stupitsyn would give instructions on the spot to the recipients of a newly-weaned pig, telling them how to feed it from a rubber teat, what consistency of milk to give, how to wash the pigling, when to put it on a diet of solids. Sucking pigs were only given away on the production of a certificate from the Poor Peasants' Committee, and, since Sherre always knew beforehand when a farrowing was to be expected, there was usually a

schedule hanging on the hog-house door, showing when this or that citizen could come for his pigling.

This distribution of piglings spread our fame throughout the district, and we soon had many friends among the villagers. In all the surrounding villages good English hogs and sows were growing up, not fit, perhaps, for breed stock, but capable of fattening up gloriously.

The next section of the hog-house was the "nursery." This was a real laboratory, in which the strictest observation of each individual was maintained before deciding upon his future career. Sherre always had several hundred young ones on hand—their numbers rising in the spring. The colonists knew many of these gifted youngsters by sight, and followed their development with the utmost interest and attention. The most promising were even known to me, to Kalina Ivanovich, to the Commanders' Council, and to many of the colonists. From the day of his birth, for example, the son of Vasili Ivanovich and Matilda was the centre of attention. Born a Hercules, he displayed from the start all the required points, and was destined to follow in his father's footsteps. He did not disappoint our expectations, and was soon placed in a special pen beside his sire, and named Pyotr Vasilyevich, after Trepke the younger.

Still further back came the feeding pen. This was the domain of receipts and weight charts, where bourgeois bliss and quiet reigned supreme. If, on being weaned, certain individuals gave evidence of philosophical doubt, or went so far as to give loud utterance to various philosophical conceptions, in a month's time they would be lying quietly in their straw, meekly digesting their rations. Their biographies would end in compulsory feeding, till a day at last came when an individual was handed over to the authority of Kalina Ivanovich, and Silanti, on the sandy slope near the old park, converted the individual, without a single philosophical qualm, into pork, while at the storeroom Alyoshka Volkov got a barrel ready for the reception of lard.

The very last compartment was the sow pen, but here only the high priests might enter in, so that I myself did not know all the mysteries of this holy of holies.

The hog-house brought us in a good income; we had

never counted on becoming, in such a short time, a paying concern. Sherre's crop-raising, regulated to the ultimate detail, provided us with huge fodder reserves—beet, pumpkins, maize, potatoes. It was all we could do in the autumn to get these stocks under cover.

The acquisition of the mill opened wide horizons to us. Besides payment for milling (four pounds per pood) the mill brought us in bran, the most valuable of all fodder for our livestock.

The mill was also significant on another plane—it placed us on a new footing with the whole of the surrounding peasantry, thus enabling us to embark upon a most important and comprehensive policy. The mill was the colony's Foreign Office. It was impossible to make the slightest move without finding ourselves involved in the intricate web of the ever-changing peasant situation. There was a Poor Peasants' Committee in every village, most of them active and disciplined; there were middle peasants, round and firm as a pea, and, like peas, closed up each in his separate compartment and exclusive; there were "bosses," too—kulaks—grown grim in their strongholds, savage with bottled-up fury and sour memories.

Having got the mill into our hands, we announced from the very start that we wished to have dealings with collectives, and that we would give them priority. We asked for a list of collectives to be drawn up in advance. The poor peasants formed such collectives with ease, arrived punctually, obeyed their representatives implicitly, and settled their accounts quickly and quietly, so that the work of the mill ran smoothly. The "bosses" formed small collectives, close-knit, however, by mutual sympathies and the ties of blood. There was a sort of massive silence about their organization, and it was often hard even to make out which were the elders among them.

When, however, companies of middle peasants came to the mill, the work of the colonists became hard labour. They never came together, but straggled in throughout the day. They did have a representative, but he gave in his own grain first, as a matter of course, and immediately went home, leaving behind him a crowd agitated by all sorts of suspicions and vaguely aware of unfairness. Having made the journey an excuse for breakfasting on

copious draughts of *samogon*, our clients displayed strong tendencies to settle on the spot various domestic conflicts; and by dinner-time, after prolonged debate and a certain amount of scuffling, which fairly exasperated the colonists, many of the clients became patients in Ekaterina Grigoryevna's dressing station. Osadchy, the commander of the ninth detachment, which worked at the mill, went purposely to the improvised hospital, to have it out with Ekaterina Grigoryevna.

"Why should you bandage him? As if they could be cured! They're muzhiks—you don't know them! Start curing them and they'll only fall to cutting one another's throats. Hand them over to us—we'll cure them for you! You ought to see what's going on at the mill!"

The truth must be admitted—both the ninth detachment and Denis Kudlaty, the manager of the mill, knew how to cure the squabblers and reduce them to order, in the course of time earning great fame in this respect, and gaining a reputation for infallibility.

Up till dinner-time the lads would stand quietly at the hopper, amidst a raging sea of obscenity, whiffs of *samogon*, waving arms, the snatching of sacks one from another, endless calculations as to turn, mixed up with other calculations and recollections. When the boys could no longer endure all this, Osadchy would lock the door of the mill and resort to repressive measures. The members of the ninth detachment, clutching three or four of the tipsiest and most abusive in a brief embrace, would seize them beneath the armpits and conduct them to the bank of the Kolomak. With the most businesslike air, sweetly conversing and persuading the while, the colonists would seat their victims on the bank, there, with admirable thoroughness, to throw over them the contents of a dozen pails of water. The victims, at first unable to make out what had happened, would stubbornly return to the subject under discussion at the mill. Osadchy, his sunburnt legs planted wide apart, his hands thrust in the pockets of his shorts, would lend an attentive ear to the patient's mutterings, following his every movement with cold grey eyes.

"Three more 'bloodies'—let him have another three pails." The preoccupied Lapot would provide the amount

required, with a sweeping gesture, after which he would look into the patient's face with assumed gravity, just as if he were a doctor.

The patient, at last becoming alive to the situation, would rub his eyes and feebly protest, shaking his head:

"Who gave you the right? Hey! You!"

Osadchy would calmly give the order:

"One more dose."

"One more dose of H_2O ," Lapot would sing out sweetly, pouring a pail of water with cautious thrift over the patient's head, as if it were the last drop of some precious medicine. Bending over the long-suffering, moist chest, he would command, with the same tender anxiety as before:

"Hold your breath . . . draw a long breath . . . again—hold your breath."

To the delight of all, the thoroughly bewildered patient would obey Lapot's commands with the utmost docility, now preserving complete immobility, now expanding his abdomen and hiccoughing. . . . Lapot would straighten himself with a relieved expression.

"Condition satisfactory, pulse 370, temperature 15."

Lapot knew how to keep a straight face in such cases, and the whole procedure was carried out in a strictly scientific tone. But the lads on the bank of the river, standing there with the empty pails in their hands, could not restrain their guffaws, and a crowd of villagers on the top of the slope would smile in sympathy. Lapot would approach this crowd, and ask, with an air of grave courtesy:

"Who's next? Whose turn for the water treatment?"

The villagers received Lapot's every word with open mouths, as if it were nectar, beginning to laugh before each word was uttered.

"Comrade Professor," Lapot would say to Osadchy. "There are no more patients."

"Let the convalescents be dried," Osadchy would command.

The ninth detachment would begin zealously laying the patients, now really recovering their senses, on the grass, turning them over in the sunshine.

"Don't! I'll do it myself!" one of them would implore, grinning, his voice now quite sober. "I'm quite well now."

Only then would Lapot laugh, good-humouredly and frankly announcing:

"That one's recovered—he may be discharged!"

Others would go on resisting, even trying to maintain their old formulae: "You go to..." but Osadchy's terse reminder of the pail would bring them to a state of complete sobriety, and they would beg: "Don't! On my honour—swearing's a habit with me—it slipped out!"

Lapot would examine such individuals thoroughly, as if their case were the worst of all, while the laughter of the colonists and villagers would pass all bounds, only interrupted in order not to miss some new pearl of speech.

"A habit, you say? Have you had it long?"

"How can you—God forbid!" would reply the patient, blushing and confused, but afraid to make any stronger protest, for the ninth detachment on the bank had not yet put down their pails.

"Not long, you say? And did your parents suffer from swearing?"

"Of course they did," said the patient, smiling foolishly.

"And your grandfather?"

"My grandfather, too."

"And your uncle?"

"Well, of course."

"And your grandmother?"

"Of course she ... God forbid! My grandmother—she may not have. ..."

All the onlookers, and Lapot, too, rejoiced to hear that the patient's grandmother had been perfectly healthy.

Embracing the dripping patient, Lapot would say:

"It'll pass! It'll pass, I tell you! Come and see us more often. We charge nothing for treatment."

The patient, together with his friends and foes, would go off into fits of laughter, but Lapot continued seriously, while turning towards the mill, where Osadchy was already unlocking the door:

"If you prefer it we can visit you in your home. That's gratis, too. But you must apply two weeks in advance, and send horses for the professor. And you must provide

the pails and water. I'll treat your father, if you like. Your mother, too."

"His mother doesn't suffer from that illness," someone would say, suppressing his guffaws for the moment.

"I beg your pardon—I asked you about your parents, and you said, 'Yes, of course.'"

"I never!" the convalescent would exclaim in astonishment.

The villagers would be frantic with delight.

"Ha-ha-ha! Just fancy! Slandering his own mother!"

"Who?"

"Him—Yavtukh! The one who's ill!—Oh, I shall die! Honestly—I shall die! Oh, the swine! And that young fellow—he won't even smile for a moment. A splendid doctor!"

Lapot would be borne back in triumph to the mill, and the order would be given in the engine room to resume work. The atmosphere in which work was now carried on would be the diametrical opposite of what it had been before. The clients would hasten to fulfil all Kudlaty's orders with an almost excessive zeal, each keeping to his turn without a murmur, and greedily drinking up every word uttered by Lapot, whose fund of language and mimicry was positively inexhaustible. By the evening milling was over, and the villagers, affectionately pressing the colonists' hands before getting into their carts, would exultantly revive the memory of their past enjoyment.

"And his grandmother, he says! What a lad! If we could have one such lad for each village, no one would think of going to church."

"Hi, Karpo! Are you dry now?" someone would exclaim. "And how's your head? Everything all right? Your Granny, too? Ha-ha-ha!"

Karpo would smile into his beard in confusion, as he settled the bags on his cart.

"Never gave it a thought," he would say, wagging his head. "And there I am—in the hospital!"

"Come on, now—swear! Or have you forgotten how?"

"Not now, he won't! Perhaps after he gets past Storozhevoye he'll swear at his horse!"

"Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

The fame of the ninth detachment's water cure spread far, and our clients would every now and then recall this splendid institution, and show a strong desire to get more closely acquainted with Lapot. The latter would extend his hand with a grave and friendly gesture.

"I'm only the senior assistant. That's the chief professor—Comrade Osadchy."

Osadchy would glance coldly at the visitors. These latter would clap Lapot cautiously on his naked shoulder.

"Assistant? If anybody starts swearing in the village, now, he's told: Shall we bring you the water doctor from the colony? He's willing to visit us in our homes, you know!"

We soon managed to establish our own atmosphere in the mill. It was lively, cheerful, brisk. Discipline stole about on noiseless feet, always ready, with due caution, to take by the hand anyone chancing to infringe its severe laws, and put him in his place.

In July we organized re-elections to the Village Soviet. Luka Semyonovich and his friends surrendered their positions without a struggle. Pavel Pavlovich Nikolayenko became the chairman and, of the colonists, Denis Kudlaty was elected to the Village Soviet.

9

THE FOURTH MIXED

In the end of July the fourth mixed worked under the command of Burun with fifty members. Burun was the acknowledged commander of the fourth mixed, and none of the colonists laid any claim to this difficult, but honourable post.

The fourth mixed detachment worked from dawn to dusk. The lads would often say that they worked "without signals," for no signal was sounded to summon members to their work, or to announce the cessation of work. Burun's fourth mixed was at present working at the threshing.

At four o'clock in the morning, after reveille and breakfast, the fourth mixed drew up along the flower bed opposite the main entrance to the White House. All the teachers were ranged at the colonists' right flank.

They were not actually obliged to take part in the work of the fourth mixed, with the exception of the two who were on working duty, but it had long been considered etiquette in the colony to work in the fourth mixed, so that not a single self-respecting person would miss the order for its organization. On the right flank would be Sherre, Kalina Ivanovich, Silanti Otchenash, Oksana, Rakhil, our two laundresses, the secretary Spiridon, and the senior roller from the mill, on leave at the moment, wheelwright-instructor Kozyr, Mizyak, our red-haired, gloomy gardener, his wife, the beautiful Nadenka, the wife of Zhurbin, and a few others—I didn't even know them all.

And there would be many volunteers in the colonists' ranks—any members happening to be free at the moment from the ninth and tenth detachments, the second stable-workers' detachment, the third cowshed detachment—they would all be there.

Maria Kondratyevna Bokova, alone, though she did take the trouble to get up early, and came to us in an old cotton sarafan, did not take her place in the ranks, but sat in the porch chatting with Burun. For some time now Maria Kondratyevna had ceased inviting me either to tea, or to partake of ice cream, but she was just as nice to me as to the rest, and I did not feel offended with her in the least. I even liked her more than formerly. Her eyes had become graver and sterner, and her chaffing more good-natured. During this time Maria Kondratyevna had got to know many of the little ones and the girls, had made friends with Silanti, and had got the hang of some of our more difficult natures. Maria Kondratyevna was a charming, a delightful person, but nevertheless I urged her quietly: "Maria Kondratyevna, go and stand in line. Everyone will be glad to receive you in the workers' lines."

Maria Kondratyevna smiled at the morning glow, tucked up with her rosy fingers a rebellious, sun-kissed lock, and replied, a little huskily, in her deep chesty voice:

"Thank you, and what will I do today—thrash, eh?"

"Not thrash, but thresh," said Burun. "You'll write down the output of grain."

"And will I be able to do this well?"

"I'll show you how."

"Haven't you found me work that is too easy?"

Burun smiled.

"All our work is the same. Tell us about it in the evening, when the fourth mixed comes to supper."

"My! How nice that sounds. Supper in the evening, after work!"

I noted Maria Kondratyevna's emotion, and turned aside to hide my smiles. Maria Kondratyevna, already standing in the right flank, was laughing musically at something or other, and Kalina Ivanovich, most gallant of fauns, was pressing her hand and laughing, too.

Eight drummers came running up, beating a light tattoo, and ranged themselves on the right flank. Four buglers, their boyish elastic figures swaying slightly, approached, and held themselves in readiness. The colonists drew themselves up, and fell serious.

"To the colours! Attention!"

Slender bare arms flew up along the ranks—the salute. Nastya Nochevnaya, colony monitor for the day, attired in her best, with a red armband, beneath the rolling of the drums and the silvery greetings of the trumpets, carried to the right flank the silk Gorky banner, guarded on either side by the cold gleaming steel of two fixed bayonets.

"Form fours—right! Forward march!"

There was slight confusion in the ranks of the grown-ups, Maria Kondratyevna suddenly squeaked and glanced nervously at me, but the march of the drummers set everyone right. The fourth mixed had gone out to work.

Burun caught the detachment up at a run, shifted his feet to fall into step, and led the way to the place where a high, neat wheat stack, built by Silanti, had long adorned the field, side by side with several smaller stacks which were not quite so neat—stacks of rye, oats and barley, as well as that special rye which even the peasants were unable to recognize and took for barley. These stacks had been built by Karabanov, Chobot, Fedorenko, and it has to be admitted, work and sweat as the lads might, they had been unable to outvie Silanti.

The grave, oil-stained mechanics were awaiting the arrival of the fourth detachment beside the power engine

hired from a neighbouring village. The threshing machine itself was our own, bought in the spring on the instalment plan, and, like everything else in our life, new.

Burun rapidly formed his brigades, having planned everything the day before—not for nothing was he a veteran fourth mixed commander. Our banner was raised above the stack of oats destined to be threshed last.

The wheat was finished by dinner-time. The top platform of the thresher was the gayest and most crowded place of all. Here were the girls, covered with the grey-gold wheat dust, their eyes gleaming, with Lapot as the sole representative of the boys. He was indefatigable, never resting either his back or his tongue. At the most important and responsible post could be made out Silanti's bald head and meagre moustache, saturated with the same dust.

Just now, Lapot was concentrated on Oksana.

"The colonists told you that was wheat just for fun. That's not wheat—it's pea."

Oksana received the still unbound sheaf of wheat and placed it on Lapot's head, but this by no means diminished the general satisfaction at Lapot's words.

I like threshing time. Threshing has a special charm towards evening. Music has by now crept into the monotonous beat of the machine, and the ear has grown accustomed to the peculiar musical phrase, infinitely varied from moment to moment, and yet each one like the preceding one. And this music forms such a cheerful background to the complex movement, weary by now, but stubbornly indefatigable. A row at a time, as if by some magic invocation, the sheaves rise from the ever-diminishing stack, and, speeded on their final journey by a brief, gentle touch of the colonists' hands, leap into the entrails of the insatiable machine, leaving behind them a whirlwind of scattered particles, and the moans of flying grain torn from the living sheaves. And in this whirlwind, amidst the death throes of innumerable sheaves, the colonists laughed and joked, staggering from exhaustion and excitement, scorning their own weariness, bending, running, stooping beneath heavy burdens, covered with chaff, but beginning to feel the refreshing coolness of the calm, summer evening. To the symphony of sounds,

the monotonous tunes of the clicking machinery, the excruciating dissonances of the top platform, they added an exultant, essentially major, music of healthy human fatigue. It was hard to distinguish details, but just as hard to tear oneself away from the elemental fascination of the threshing floor. The colonists could be hardly recognized in those gold-grey figures, which made me think of photographic negatives. Red-haired, black-haired, flaxen, all were now alike. It seemed almost unbelievable that the ghostlike stooping figure, standing from the early morning, notebook in hand, in the very thick of the vortex, could be Maria Kondratyevna, and it was hard to recognize the clumsy, crumpled shadow at her side. I only knew it to be Eduard Nikolayevich from his voice, which was, as ever, courteous and reserved.

"Comrade Bokova, how much barley have we now?"

Maria Kondratyevna turned her notebook towards the sunset glow.

"Four hundred poods, already," was her reply in such a broken, weary soprano that I felt quite sorry for her.

It was all very well for Lapot, who could find a way out even in the excess of fatigue.

"Galatenko!" he yelled, loud enough to be heard all over the threshing floor. "Galatenko!"

Galatenko, who was balancing a two-pood load of straw on his head with the aid of a pitchfork, stood swaying for a moment as he yelled back from beneath it:

"What d'you want?"

"Come here a minute—I want you!"

Galatenko cherished an almost religious devotion for Lapot. He loved him for his wit, his cheeriness, and his affection, for Lapot was the only one to appreciate Galatenko and to assure us that Galatenko had never really been lazy.

Galatenko flung the straw down in front of the engine, and hastened to the thresher. Leaning on the pitchfork, and secretly delighted at the excuse to relax a moment amidst the universal din, he began a conversation with Lapot:

"What did you call me for?"

"Listen, pal," said Lapot, bending down from above, and everyone around began to listen to the conversation

in confident expectation of hearing something amusing.

"Well, I'm listening."

"Go to our bedroom."

"Well?"

"Under my pillow, there. . . ."

"What?"

"Under my pillow, I say. . . ."

"But what?"

"Under my pillow you'll find. . . ."

"I understand it's under your pillow. . . ."

"...a pair of spare hands."

"And what d'you want me to do with them?" asked Galatenko.

"Bring them here as quick as you can, these are no good any more," said Lapot, displaying his hands beneath general laughter.

"I see," said Galatenko.

He understood that everyone was laughing at Lapot's words, and, possibly, at himself. He had tried hard not to say anything silly or ridiculous, and he thought he had been successful, for only Lapot had spoken. But everyone laughed still more, the thresher was beginning to click idly, and Burun began to scold.

"What's all this? Why have you stopped working? It's all you, Galatenko!"

"I never. . . ."

Everyone fell silent as Lapot, in a voice of tense gravity, with a marvellous assumption of weariness, anxiety, and friendly confidence in Burun, said:

"You see, these hands are no good. Do let Galatenko go and fetch me my spare ones."

Burun immediately entered into the spirit of things, and said to Galatenko in slightly reproachful tones:

"But of course! Go and fetch them! Surely that's not too much trouble! How lazy you are, Galatenko!"

The threshing symphony was over. Now came the high-toned breathless cacophony of laughter and groans; even Sherre laughed, even the mechanics abandoned the engine and laughed, clutching at their grimy knees. Galatenko turned towards the dormitories, Silanti gazed at his back.

"So that's how it is, pal!"

Galatenko stood still, and seemed to be thinking. Karabanov shouted at him from the height of the straw tower:

"What are you waiting for? Go on!"

But Galatenko grinned broadly. He understood now. Still smiling, he returned slowly to the threshing floor. The boys asked him from the straw:

"Where have you been?"

"Lapot, you see, told me to go and get some spare hands."

"Well, why didn't you go?"

"He hasn't got any spare hands, he was just fooling."

Burun gave the order:

"That'll do—no more about spare hands! Go on working!"

"Enough is enough," said Lapot, "we'll have to go on using the old ones."

At nine o'clock Sherre stopped the engine, and went up to Burun.

"The boys are worn out. And there's half an hour's work left."

"Never mind!" said Burun. "We'll finish it."

Lapot shouted from above:

"Comrade Gorkyites! There's half an hour's work left. And I'm afraid another half hour'll about finish us off. I don't agree."

"What d'you want, then?" asked Burun suspiciously.

"I protest! In half an hour we shall be done for. Shan't we, Galatenko?"

"Why, yes, that's true. Half an hour's a long time."

Lapot raised his clenched fist.

"We can't go on half an hour. We've got to finish everything, this whole heap, in a quarter of an hour. None of your half hours!"

"That's right!" shouted Galatenko. "He's right there!"

Sherre started the engine to the accompaniment of a fresh outburst of laughter. Everything was finished by another twenty minutes. And suddenly all were overcome by the desire to drop on to the straw, and sleep. But Burun gave the order: "Fall in!"

The buglers and drummers, who had long been awaiting their hour, rushed up to the front row. The fourth

mixed escorted the banner to its place in the White House. I remained at the threshing floor, and from the White House the sounds of the salute to the colours floated back to me. In the dark a figure bearing in its hand a long staff stumbled against me.

"Who is it?" I exclaimed.

"It's me, Anton Semyonovich. I've come to you about the thresher. From the Volovy farmstead, you know, and my name is Volovik."

"All right! Come to the house."

We, too, set off for the White House. Volovik, an old man, apparently, was mumbling in the dark.

"It's fine here, like people used to live."

"How's that?"

"Well, look! You go out threshing with cross and banners, the proper way."

"Where d'you see the cross? That's only the banner. And we have no priest."

Volovik ran on a short way ahead, gesticulating with his stick.

"The priest doesn't matter," he cried. "What matters is that people make a festival. It's a sort of holiday. Look! For people to bring in the harvest is the festival of festivals, and our folk have forgotten that."

It was noisy at the White House. Tired as the colonists were, they were not too tired for a dip in the river, and after their bath there seemed to be no fatigue left. It was gay and noisy at the tables in the garden, and Maria Kondratyevna was ready to weep for all sorts of reasons—because she was tired, because she loved the colonists, because, in her too, the true law of humanity had been revived, because she, too, had tasted of the delights of a free, working collective.

"Well, was your work too easy?" Burun asked her.

"I don't know," said Maria Kondratyevna. "It was hard, I suppose, but that's not the point. Such work is happiness, anyhow."

Silanti sat next to me at supper, and became confidential.

"They asked me, you know, to tell you: on Sunday the matchmakers, as they say, will come here about Olga. You see how it is!"

"From Nikolayenko?"

"You see, it's from Pavel Ivanovich, the old man, I mean. And you must put your best foot forward, Anton Semyonovich. There must be those hand towels, you see, bread and salt, and that's all about it!"

"Silanti, old chap, you see too all that!"

"I can see to it, as they say, but you know how it is, brother, people are supposed to drink on such occasions, *samogon* or something, you know."

"No *samogon*, Silanti, but you can buy two bottles of sweet wine."

10

THE WEDDING

On Sunday we were visited by emissaries from Pavel Ivanovich Nikolayenko. They were people we knew—Kuzma Petrovich Mogorych and Osip Ivanovich Stomukha. Kuzma Petrovich was well known to everyone in the colony, for he lived not far from us, just the other side of the river. He was a garrulous person, with no solidity of character. He had a weed-grown, sandy field, on which he seldom worked, and on which grew all sorts of trash—mainly on its own initiative. Innumerable paths were trodden through this field, which lay in everyone's way. The countenance of Kuzma Petrovich was like his field, for on it, too, nothing useful would grow, and each tuft of his dingy sparse beard seemed like a weed, sprouting, quite irrespective of its owner's interests. Over his countenance, too, ran innumerable paths—wrinkles, folds, and ruts. The only thing which distinguished Kuzma Petrovich from his field was his long thin nose. Osip Ivanovich, on the contrary, was very good-looking. He had the handsomest face and the best figure of any man in Goncharovka. He had a big red moustache, and fine, insolent, somewhat prominent eyes; his attire was half urban, half military, and he always looked smart and slender. He had many relatives among the more prosperous peasantry, but for some reason or other he had no land himself, and his sole apparent occupation was hunting. He lived right on the bank of the river, in a lonely hut which seemed to shun the village.

Although we had known that guests were to be expected, they caught us ill-prepared. And how were we to know the preparations necessary in such an unfamiliar business? True, all was solid, calm and imposing in my office when they entered. They found there no one but Kalina Ivanovich and myself. The visitors entered, pressed our hands, and seated themselves on the sofa. I did not know how to begin, and was glad when Osip Ivanovich made a simple opening.

"Formerly in such cases they used to tell a tale about hunters—we went a-hunting, and we found a fox, and the fox was the pretty girl.... But I think that isn't necessary now, though I'm a hunter myself."

"Quite right," I said.

Kuzma Petrovich shuffled his feet without rising from the sofa, and wagged his beard:

"All nonsense, that's what I say!"

Stomukha corrected him.

"It's not that it's nonsense—it's just that the times are changed."

"There are different sorts of times," began Kalina Ivanovich magisterially. "Sometimes the people's minds are in darkness and that's not enough for them—they have to invent all sorts of spooks to frighten themselves with, and live like dunderheads, afraid of everything—thunder, the moon, a black cat. But now we have the Soviet government—now we're not afraid of anything, unless it's the stop-the-way detachment."

Stomukha interrupted Kalina Ivanovich, who had apparently forgotten that we were not gathered together for a philosophic chat.

"We'll say what we've come about quite simply—we've been sent to you by people whom you know—Pavel Ivanovich Nikolayenko and his wife, Evdokia Stepanovna. We ask you as father here, in the colony, if you are willing to give your, as it were, daughter Olya Voronova in marriage to their son Pavel Pavlovich, the latter being at present chairman of the Village Soviet."

"We request your answer," chimed in Kuzma Petrovich. "If you agree, and as the father is willing, then let's have the towels and bread, and if you don't agree we would

ask you not to take it amiss that we have troubled you."

"Tee-hee! That's not enough," said Kalina Ivanovich. "According to your silly law you ought to take a pumpkin home."

"We won't hold out for pumpkins," smiled Osip Ivanovich. "Anyhow it's not the season for them."

"That's true," agreed Kalina Ivanovich. "But in the old times, a lass, if the silly thing was vain, would keep a room full of pumpkins—just in case, you know. And if the suitors did not come, she would make a gruel with them, the parasite! Pumpkin gruel is good, especially if it's made with millet."

"Well, and what is your paternal reply?" asked Osip Ivanovich.

I replied:

"Thanks for the honour. I'm not the father, however, and my authority is not paternal. You'll have to ask Olya herself, of course, and afterwards all sorts of details will have to be decided by the Commanders' Council."

"It's not for us to tell you what to do, you just do the right thing according to the new customs," agreed Osip Ivanovich quietly.

I went out of the office, and finding the colony monitor in the next room asked him to have the signal given for a meeting of the Commanders' Council. An unusually feverish and excited atmosphere prevailed in the colony. Nastya rushed up to me, asking, through laughter:

"Where are we to bring the towels? In here?" She nodded towards the office.

"Don't be in such a hurry with the towels, we haven't come to terms yet. You just stick around—I'll call you when you're needed."

"And who'll do the tying up?"

"Tying what up?"

"The towels! They have to be tied on to the what d'you call them—matchmakers."

Toska Solovyov was standing beside me, holding a great wheat loaf under his arm, and in his hand a salt-cellar, which he was shaking for the pleasure of watching the grains of salt jump. Silanti came running up.

"What are you shaking the bread-and-salt about for? You must put it on a dish."

He bent down, endeavouring to conceal the laughter with which he was consumed.

"Oh, these little fellows! And what about snacks?"

Ekaterina Grigoryevna made her appearance, to my intense relief.

"Help us with this business!" I implored her.

"I've been looking for them for ages. They've been dragging this bread about the colony since the early morning. Come along with me. We'll manage, don't you worry. We'll be in the girls' room, send for us."

The barelegged commanders came running into the office. I still have a list of the commanders during that happy epoch. It runs:

Commander of the First Detachment (cobblers)—Gud.

Commander of the Second Detachment (grooms)—Bratchenko.

Commander of the Third Detachment (cowherds)—Oprishko.

Commander of the Fourth Detachment (carpenters)—Taranets.

Commander of the Fifth Detachment (girls)—Nochevnaya.

Commander of the Sixth Detachment (smiths)—Belukhin.

Commander of the Seventh Detachment—Vetkovsky.

Commander of the Eighth Detachment—Karabanov.

Commander of the Ninth Detachment (millers)—Osadchy.

Commander of the Tenth Detachment (hog tenders)—Stupitsyn.

Commander of the Eleventh Detachment (small fry)—Georgievsky.

Secretary of the Commanders' Council—Kolya Vershnev.

Mill manager—Kudlaty.

Storekeeper—Alyosha Volkov.

Assistant agronomist—Olya Voronova.

In reality many more than these met in the Commanders' Council. Members of the Komsomol organization—Zadorov, Zhorka Volkov, Volokhov, Burun—had a

perfect, acknowledged right, as well as those hoary veterans, Prikhodko, Soroka, Golos, Chobot, Ovcharenko, Fedorenko, Koryto, while on the floor would cluster those of the little fellows who were interested, among whom were invariably Mitka, Vitka, Toska, and Vanka Shelaputin. There were always teachers at meetings of the Council, too, as well as Kalina Ivanovich and Silanti Semyonovich. And so there were never enough chairs to go round, and people sat on window sills, or stood outside peering in at the windows.

Kolya Vershnev opened the meeting. The matchmakers, crowded by about a dozen colonists on the sofa, lost some of their solemnity among the medley of bare arms and legs.

I told the commanders of the arrival of the matchmakers. This was no news to the Commanders' Council, for everyone had long remarked the friendship between Pavel Pavlovich and Olya. Merely for form's sake Vershnev asked Olya:

"Are you willing to marry Pavel?"

Olya, blushing slightly, said:

"Of course I am!"

Lapot pouted.

"That's not the way. You ought to resist so that we could persuade you. Otherwise it's no fun."

"Fun or no fun," said Kalina Ivanovich, "we've got to talk business. Just you tell us frankly what you mean to do about property and all that."

Osip Ivanovich touched his moustache.

"It's like this—if you give your consent, we'll take the wedding feast and the marriage ceremony upon ourselves, and afterwards the young couple will live with the old people. And since they'll live together, the property will be in common."

"And who's the new hut been built for?" asked Karabanov.

"That hut'll be for Mikhail."

"But isn't Pavel the eldest?"

"He's the eldest, of course, that's true. But the old man decided it should be so. You see, Pavel's taking a wife from the colony."

"Well, and what if she is from the colony?" Koval growled out disagreeably.

Osip Ivanovich did not know what to say at first. Kuzma Petrovich piped out in his reedy voice:

"That's how it works out. Pavel Ivanovich says: the wife has to go to the husband, because, you see, this one has a father, so there's a father-in-law—Mikhail is taking a wife from Sergei Grechany. And yours, you see, comes with Pavel Pavlovich, as a daughter-in-law. Pavel Pavlovich himself agrees to this."

"At that rate we'll soon be dealing in pumpkins," said Karabanov with a wave of his hand. "What do we care about Pavel Pavlovich's consent? It only means he has no guts, that's all. The Commanders' Council can't give Olya away like that. As far as that goes it would be the same thing as becoming a farm hand to the old devil."

"Semyon," said Kolka, frowning.

"All right, all right! I take back the word devil. That's one thing. The next thing is—what's this marriage ceremony you spoke about?"

"That's the proper thing—nobody ever got married without the priests. Such a thing has never happened in our village."

"Well, now it's going to," said Koval.

Kuzma Petrovich scratched his beard.

"Who knows what's going to happen, and what's not going to happen? Among us it's not considered nice. It's the same as living in sin."

Silence fell upon the Council. All were thinking of one and the same thing—the marriage would not come off. I was even afraid the lads, should things go wrong, would send away the matchmakers with little ceremony.

"Olya, would you like to be married by a priest?" asked Kolya.

"What's the matter with you—has your breakfast disagreed with you? Have you forgotten I'm a Kom-somol?"

"It's no go about the priests," I told the matchmakers. "Think out something else. You knew where you were going, didn't you? How could you think for a moment that we would agree to a church wedding?"

Silanti rose in his place, and got his finger ready for a speech.

"Silanti, do you wish to speak?" asked Kolya.

"There's something I want to ask."

"Ask away, then."

"Kuzma, you see, he's what you call a dreamer. Let Osip Ivanovich tell us what they want priests for? You'd do better fattening a pig."

"To hell with them!" laughed Stomukha. "Whenever I meet one of them, I turn back, and don't go hunting."

"It means it's Kuzma who wants all this."

Kuzma Petrovich smiled.

"Hee-hee, it isn't that! It's like this, you see—our grandfathers and our great-grandfathers did it that way, and Pavel Ivanovich says—we're taking a poor girl, without any, what d'you call it—dowry, and so on."

Kalina Ivanovich banged with his fist on the table.

"What's all this?" he cried. "What right have you to jabber? Who is this rich man to give himself airs in front of us? You think just because you and your Pavel Ivanovich have built a clay hut you can go about putting on airs! He thinks, the parasite, just because he has a table and a couple of benches and a leather coat put away in a chest, he's a millionaire!"

Kuzma Petrovich, alarmed, piped out:

"Who's putting on airs? We only just mentioned a dowry, as it were."

"Do you know where you are? This is the Soviet government. Perhaps you don't know what the Soviet government is like? The Soviet government can give a dowry that would make all your stinking grandfathers turn three times in their graves, the parasites!"

Kuzma attempted a feeble protest:

"We only. . . ."

The boys roared with laughter, and applauded Kalina Ivanovich. Kalina Ivanovich grew angry in good earnest.

"Let the Commanders' Council think it well over," he said. "Look! They've come matchmaking to us, but we shall have to see if we can give our daughter Olga to such a pauper as this Nikolayenko, who's never tasted anything better than potatoes and onion, who grows goosefoot instead of rye, the parasite. But we're rich people, we have to think things over carefully."

The delight of the Commanders' Council and all present showed that there were no longer any problems

to solve. The matchmakers were sent out of the office for a time, and the Commanders' Council embarked upon the discussion of a dowry for Olya.

The boys had been touched on the raw by the preceding negotiation, and assigned Olga a dowry which would have been splendid by any standards. Sherre was sent for, and there was some fear that he would raise objections to such great sacrifices, but Sherre, without even pausing to think, said sternly:

"That's right! However hard it may be for us, Voronova must be made a wealthy bride, the wealthiest in the district. Those kulaks must be put into their places."

Thus it was that any objections which did arise during the discussion of the dowry were only of this sort:

"Colt—nonsense! She must have a horse, not a colt!"

An hour later the matchmakers, who had been recovering their equilibrium in the fresh air, were called to the Council, and Kolya Vershnev, standing up behind the table, uttered, stammering slightly, the following imposing speech:

"The Commanders' Council has resolved as follows: to marry Olya to Pavel. Pavel to move into a separate hut, and his father to give him what he can from his own farm. No priests, the wedding to be registered at the ZAGS.* The first day of the wedding to be celebrated here, and you do what you like afterwards. Olya to be given, to start a farm with:

A Simmenthal cow and a calf,
a mare and a colt,
five sheep,
an English sow...."

Kolya grew quite hoarse during the reading of the endless list of Olga's dowry. Herein were included agricultural instruments, seed, fodder reserves, clothing, linen, furniture, and even a sewing machine. Kolya wound up as follows:

"We will always help Olya if necessary, and she and her husband are bound to give their help to the colony, whenever this is required. And Pavel to receive the title of Colonist."

* Registry office.—*Tr.*

The matchmakers blinked nervously, and looked as if they were about to assist at their own last rites. The laughing girls, no longer troubling their heads about what was right or what was wrong, came running up to tie the towels on to the matchmakers, and the younger boys, led by Toska, handed them bread and salt on a dish covered with a napkin. The matchmakers, confused and awkward, took the bread, but did not know what to do with it. Toska drew the dish from beneath Kuzma Petrovich's armpit, saying cheerfully:

"Hi! Give that back, or I shall get into trouble with the miller. It's his . . . what d'you call it? . . . plate."

The girls laid a cloth on my table, and set out three bottles of sweet red wine, and a dozen or so glasses. Kalina Ivanovich poured out a glass for everyone, and said, raising his own:

"That she may grow and obey!"

"Obey who?" asked Osip Ivanovich.

"Everyone knows who—the Commanders' Council, and the Soviet government in general."

We all clinked glasses, tossed them off, and ate sausage sandwiches.

Kuzma Petrovich bowed:

"Thanks for arranging everything so nicely. It means we can go and congratulate Pavel Ivanovich and Evdokia Semyonovna."

"Go ahead—congratulate them!" said Kalina Ivanovich.

Osip Ivanovich pressed our hands.

"You're splendid folk. There's no beating you!"

The matchmakers, hushed and meek as schoolgirls, went out of the office and made for the village. We watched them out of sight. Suddenly Kalina Ivanovich narrowed his eyes gaily and shrugged his shoulders in mock content.

"That won't do! Going away like stuffed owls! Run after them, Petya, and tell them to come to my room, and you, Anton, harness the horses in an hour's time and drive up."

An hour later the boys, amidst laughter, bundled the matchmakers into the carriage, still with the towels tied to them, but having lost many other marks of official emissaries, including articulate speech. Kuzma Petrovich,

it is true, had not forgotten the bread, and was clutching it lovingly to his chest. Molodets drew the heavy carriage over the sandy path as if it had been a feather.

Kalina Ivanovich spat.

"He sent such poor ones on purpose, the parasite!"

"Who did?"

"Why, that Nikolayenko! He wanted to show us—as the bride is, so are the matchmakers."

"It's not that," said Silanti. "It's like this, you see! Some people wouldn't have gone as matchmakers when there weren't going to be priests, and these here, they don't give a hang for the priests, not they! And the old fox, you know who I mean, he said: 'Make believe you must have priests, and if they refuse, to hell with it. . . .' That's how it is, you see."

The wedding being arranged for the middle of August, commissions set to work, and a performance was prepared. There was any amount of trouble, and still more expenditure. Kalina Ivanovich could not help feeling gloomy.

"If we are to marry off all our girls like this, Anton Semyonovich," he said, "you'd better take the boys and me, old fool that I am, and we'll go out begging alms . . . but it can't be helped, I know that."

On the day of the wedding the colony was surrounded by sentries—two detachments had to be allotted by way of a guard. We sent out invitations—properly printed—to not more than seventy persons. These invitations ran as follows:

"The Commanders' Council of the Maxim Gorky Labour Colony requests your presence at a dinner, to be followed by a theatrical performance in celebration of the departure from the Colony of Colonist Olga Voronova, and her marriage to Comrade Pavel Pavlovich Nikolayenko.

"Commanders' Council."

By two o'clock in the afternoon everything was ready in the colony. The festive tables were set out in the garden around the fountain. The decoration of this place was the contribution of Zinovi Ivanovich's art circle: slender poles, from which the ingeniously placed garlands of

birchshoots hung gracefully, had been stuck into the earth all round the alfresco dining room, and no one, calmly admiring these garlands, gave a thought to the difficult task it had been for the boys to hang them there. The tables themselves were adorned with jars of white roses—Sherre's "snow queens."

Today the extent to which the colony had developed and the improvement in its outward appearance, were most happily and incontrovertibly apparent. The broad, sanded paths of the park emphasized the wealth of greenery of the orchard terraces, on which every tree, every group of bushes, every line in the flower beds, had been thought out in the silence of the night, watered with the sweat of mixed detachments, and beautified, as by precious stones, with the care and love of the whole collective. The high and low places of the riverbanks had been disciplined with a stern but loving hand: a flight of wooden steps, a birchen rail, a rectangular carpet of flowers, narrow, winding paths, a miniature embankment strewn with sand, all furnished additional proof of the superiority of man over nature, even of barefooted representatives of humanity like ourselves. And in the spacious yards of this barefooted master, he, the stepchild of old humanity, had managed to heal the deep wounds of the past with the hand of an artist. As far back as autumn the colonists had planted two hundred rosebushes here, but nobody could have counted the number of asters, carnations, stock, vermillion geraniums, blue Canterbury bells, and all sorts of other unknown and unnamed flowers. The yard was surrounded by hard roads, linking up the areas around individual buildings, squares and triangles of rye grass lent significance and freshness to unoccupied spaces, and here and there stood green garden benches.

Everything had become pleasant, homelike, beautiful and rational in the colony, and seeing all this I was proud of my own participation in the adornment of our planet. But I had my own aesthetic whims. Neither flowers, nor paths, nor shady nooks could for a moment distract my attention from those boys in their dark-blue shorts and white shirts. There they were—running about, moving quietly among the guests, busying themselves around the

tables, standing at their posts, keeping out the hundreds of idlers who had come to gape at the extraordinary wedding. There they were, the Gorkyites! Graceful and well-knit, they have fine, elastic figures, muscular and healthy bodies which owe nothing to medicine, and fresh, red-lipped countenances. Those countenances are the work of the colony—such countenances are not brought into the colony from the streets.

Each of them has his path in life, and the Gorky Colony, too, has its path. I can discern the beginning of these paths, but how hard it is to see, through the mists surrounding the future, their direction, their continuation, their end. Elements still unconquered by man, as yet beyond the grasp of planning and mathematics, are whirling about in these mists. And in our progress among these elements, we have our own aesthetics, so that the aesthetics of flowers and parks are no longer capable of moving me.

Another reason for this may have been that Maria Kondratyevna came up to me with the question:

"Why are you indulging in melancholy all by yourself, Daddy?"

"How can I help being melancholy when everyone has deserted me, even you?"

"I would be happy to console you. I was looking for you, I didn't want to look at the wedding presents without you. Come on!"

All Olya's possessions had been gathered together in two classrooms. The guests were crowding about the display, cross, envious women pursing up their lips and glancing at me with angry attention. They had superciliously ignored our bride and married their sons to farmstead lasses, and now it appeared that the wealthiest brides had been within their reach. I recognized their right to be indignant with me.

"What are you going to do if the matchmakers begin to come in crowds?" asked Bokova.

"I'm safe," I replied. "Our girls are very particular."

Up ran a little chap, scared out of his wits.

"They're coming!"

The summons to a general meeting was already being sounded in the yard. At the porch, as the occasion required, a line of colonists and a platoon of drummers drew

up in front of the banner. Our couple came into sight round the corner of the mill, the horses decked out with red ribbons, with Bratchenko in the driver's seat, also wearing a ribbon. We saluted the young couple. Anton pulled at the reins, and Olya flung herself joyfully on my neck. Excited, laughing and crying she said:

"Mind you don't desert me—I feel so frightened!"

A brief meeting was held. Maria Kondratyevna touched and surprised me by presenting the young couple in the name of the Department of Public Education with a library of books on agriculture. Two colonists bore a great pile of books after her on flower-decked boards.

After the meeting we made the young couple stand beneath the colours and escorted them to the tables in full marching array. The place of honour had been prepared for them, and the standard-bearers stood behind them. A colonist monitor changed guard. Twenty colonists, in snow-white jackets, began to serve the dinner. Taranets' special mixed detachment cast an attentive eye on the pockets of the visitors, noiselessly dumping into the Kolomak several bottles of *samogon*, which had been extracted with the skill of conjurors and the courtesy of hosts.

I sat on one side of the young couple, and Pavel Ivanovich and Evdokia Stepanovna sat on their other side. Pavel Ivanovich, a stern individual with a beard like that of Saint Nicholas, the miracle worker, sighed heavily, either because he was vexed at his son's having become independent, or because he could not bear to look at the bottle of beer, Taranets having only just taken a bottle of *samogon* from him.

The colonists are wonderful today, I never get tired of looking at them. Animated, good-humoured, gracious, and with a touch of irony which is all their own. Even the eleventh detachment, lording it at the other end of the table, engaged the five guests under their care in lengthy and sprightly conversation. I wondered somewhat uneasily if they were not being a little too frank. I went to see. Shelaputin, who still retained his childish treble, was pouring out beer for Kozyr, and saying:

"You were married in church, and look how badly it turned out!"

"Let's marry you all over again!" suggested Toska. Kozyr smiled.

"It's too late for me to be remarried, sons."

He crossed himself, and drank up his beer. Toska laughed.

"You'll have the bellyache now."

"God forbid! Why?"

"Why did you cross yourself then?"

Next to him sat a villager with a tangled, straw-coloured beard, a guest on the list of Pavel Ivanovich. He had never been in the colony before, and everything he saw astonished him.

"Lads! Is it really true that you're the bosses here?"

"Of course, we are!" replied Shurka.

"What d'you need to farm the land for?"

Toska Solovyov turned right round towards him.

"Don't you know what for? We'd have to be farm hands otherwise, and now we don't have to."

"And what are you going to be?"

"Oho!" said Toska, flourishing a meat pie. "I'm going to be an engineer—Anton Semyonovich says I am, too—and Shelaputin is going to be a pilot."

He glanced ironically at his friend, Shelaputin, whose future as a pilot was as yet unrecognized by anyone in the colony. Shelaputin said, chewing energetically:

"M'hm, I'm going to be a pilot."

"Well, and what about working on the land, don't any of you want to?"

"Of course, we do! Some of us do. But our chaps will be different peasants from yours," said Toska, casting a swift glance at his interlocutor.

"You don't say! How d'you mean different?"

"I mean we'll be different. There'll be tractors. Have you ever seen a tractor?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Well, we have. There's a sovkhos—we took some sows there once. They've got a tractor—like a beetle it looks."

The long line of guests was linked up by our detachments. I could easily discern the outlines of each detachment, and discover from their noise where their centres were. It was liveliest of all where the ninth detachment

was, for Lapot was there, and colonists and guests were laughing and groaning around him. Lapot himself, together with his friend Taranets, had prepared an elaborate hoax against the chief personages of the mill, who were at the ninth detachment's table, placed by special order under his care. These were the sturdy, fluffy miller, the lean and angular bookkeeper, and the mechanic, a very humble individual. In his day Taranets had been a pickpocket, and it was child's play for him to extract a bottle of *samogon* from the miller's pocket and substitute for it another, filled with water from the Kolomak.

For a long time the miller and the bookkeeper sat shyly at the table, from time to time casting a glance towards Taranets' mixed detachment. But Lapot winked at them consolingly.

"You're our own folk, I'll see to everything!"

Drawing down to himself the head of the passing Taranets, he whispered something in his ear. Taranets nodded.

"You pour yourself out a glass under the table," advised Lapot confidentially, "and just colour it with beer, and everything'll be all right."

As a result of acrobatical manoeuvring under the table, glasses full of suspiciously pale beer stood beside the thirsty ones, and their happy owners nervously prepared themselves snacks beneath the attentive gaze of the silently watching ninth detachment. At last all was in readiness, and the miller, winking slyly at Lapot, raised his glass to his beard. The bookkeeper and the mechanic still looked cautiously to the right and left, but all around was quiet. Taranets was leaning nonchalantly against the trunk of a poplar. Lapot lowered his lids to conceal the sudden sparkle which had awakened in his eye.

"Well, here's to everyone!" said the miller.

The ninth detachment, bending their heads, watched their three guests toss off their glasses. A certain lack of conviction could be felt in the last few gulps. The miller placed his empty glass on the table and shot a cautious glance at Lapot, but Lapot was chewing vacantly, his thoughts apparently somewhere far away. The

bookkeeper and the mechanic tried their utmost to behave as if nothing special had happened, and even stabbed with their forks at their snacks.

The experienced miller inspected his bottle beneath the table, but someone took him gently by the hand. He raised his head—bending over him was the saucy, freckled countenance of Taranets.

“For shame!” said Taranets, actually reddening with indignation. “You were told no *samogon* must be brought—and you, one of our own folk! Look—you’ve drunk it up! Who else has been drinking?”

“The devil knows!” said the miller in confusion. “I can’t make out whether we’ve had anything or not!”

“You can’t make out? I like that! Come on now, breathe! You can’t make out, can’t you? You smell like a barrel of *samogon*! For shame—bringing such stuff to the colony!”

“What’s it all about?” inquired Kalina Ivanovich from afar.

“*Samogon*!” said Taranets, displaying the bottle.

Kalina Ivanovich shot a menacing glance at the miller. The ninth detachment had long been in a state bordering on collapse, no doubt because Lapot was telling them something funny about Galatenko. The boys had their heads on the tables, unable to bear any more humour.

There was enough merriment here to last out the dinner, for every now and then Lapot would ask the miller:

“Wasn’t it enough? And there isn’t any more? Too bad! And was it good? Not very? What a pity Fedor interfered! Why couldn’t you leave them alone, Fedor,—our own folk, after all!”

“Oh, no!” said Taranets gravely. “Look at them—they can hardly stay in their seats.”

Lapot had a long program to be carried out. He still had to raise the miller solicitously from behind the table, whispering to him the while:

“Come on, we’ll take you out through the garden—people are beginning to notice.”

Karabanov’s eighth detachment was on sentry duty for the day, but he himself kept turning up in the vicinity of the tables, just where the philosophical discussions aroused

by the unusual wedding were blazing the fiercest. Here were Koval, Spiridon, Kalina Ivanovich, Zadorov, Vershnev, Volokhov and the chairman of the Lunacharsky Commune, the wise Nesterenko, with his red goatee.

All was not well with the commune across the river, they were unsuccessful with their land, unable to balance and distribute tasks and privileges, to cope with mutinous female characters, to instil patience for the present, faith in the morrow. Nesterenko summed it all up mournfully:

"We need to get hold of new sort of people . . . and where is one to get hold of them?"

"That's not the way to talk, Comrade Nesterenko," broke in Kalina Ivanovich eagerly. "That's not the way! Those new ones, the parasites, don't know how to do anything properly. It's the *old* ones you need more of!"

Things became still noisier at the tables. Apples and pears were brought from our own orchard, and from afar could be made out barrels of ice cream—the pride of the monitors for the day.

And then, suddenly, from behind the house came the wheezing of an accordion, and the wailings of the village women, the curse of nuptial rites, rent the air. Five or six women, whirling and stamping in front of the blear-eyed, tipsy accordion player, were slowly approaching us.

"They've come for the dowry," said Taranets.

A flushed, gaunt woman seemed to be stamping about for my especial benefit, thrusting out her elbows and scraping the sand with her big, awkward boots.

"Daddy darling, daddy dear, give away your daughter for a drink, dress your daughter up. . . ."

A bottle and a ribbed glass—brown, oddly enough—suddenly appeared in her hands. With drunken recklessness she filled the glass, spilling the liquid on the earth and over her dress. Taranets came and stood between her and myself.

"That'll do," he said.

He got the bottle and glass away from her with ease, but she had already forgotten all about me, and was throwing herself avidly upon Olga, with drunken hilarity.

"Olga Petrovna, pretty one! What's this? You can't wear your plaits down your back any more! Tomorrow

we'll make you cover your head, and you'll be like all married women."

"I will *not* cover my head!" said Olga with unexpected severity.

"You won't? You'll let your plaits hang down?"

"I *will*!"

All the women began squealing and chattering, advancing upon Olya. Volokhov, furious, exasperated, shoved them away, asking their leader bluntly:

"And if she doesn't wear a kerchief—what then?"

"Let her not, then, let her not! You know best! It's not a proper wedding, anyhow!"

The diplomatic elders came up and scattered the tittering, drink-sodden women in all directions. Olga and I went out of the park.

"I'm not afraid of them," said Olga. "But it's going to be hard."

Colonists brushed past us, bearing furniture and bundles of clothing. Gogol's *Marriage* was to be given, preceded by a lecture on "Marriage Rites of Various Nationalities" by Zhurbin. The end of the festivities was not yet in sight.

11

LYRICAL INTERLUDE

Soon after Olga's wedding, a long-expected calamity overtook us—the time had come for our *Rabfak* candidates to leave us. Although we had begun talking about the *Rabfak* as long ago as the days of Raissa and her baby, and had been preparing for it daily ever since; although there was nothing we had longed for so eagerly as having our own *Rabfak* students, and although the whole business was a joyous and triumphant one—when the day of parting came there was a lump in every throat, and tears welled up in everyone's eyes. No one wanted to face the terrible fact: the colony had lived, worked, and laughed, and suddenly its own members were leaving it. Somehow no one had quite expected this fact to materialize.

After breakfast, everyone put on clean suits, and set out the festive tables in the garden, while the standard-

bearers removed the cover from the banner in my office, and the drummers slung their drums over their stomachs. But not even these festive notes could quench the gnawing flames of melancholy. Lydochka had been crying her blue eyes out since the early morning, the girls were frankly blubbering on their beds, and Ekaterina Grigoryevna, who could hardly restrain her own emotion, was trying in vain to console them. The lads were grave and silent, Lapot divested of all his charm. The younger ones ranged themselves in lines of unprecedented straightness, like so many sparrows on a telegraph wire. Perched demurely on benches and railings, their hands folded between their knees, they fixed their eyes on objects a great deal higher than their usual field of vision—roofs, treetops, the sky. And never before had there been so much nose-blowing.

I shared their childish dismay, I shared their grief—the grief of those who have an inordinate respect for justice. I agreed with Toska Solovyov—why was Matvei Belukhin not to be in the colony tomorrow? Could not matters be arranged rationally enough for Matvei not to leave, and Toska not to cherish his vast, irremediable, unmerited sorrow? But Toska was not the only chum whom Matvei was leaving, and Matvei was not the only one to be leaving. Burun, Karabanov, Zadorov, Krainik, Vershnev, Golos, Nastya Nochevnaya—they were all leaving, and each of them had dozens of chums, and Matvei, Semyon, Burun were real human beings, human beings whom it had been bliss to imitate, whose absence would mean beginning life all over again.

And it was not these emotions alone which oppressed the colony. It was apparent, both to myself and to the colonists, that the colony had its head placed on the executioner's block, and that the axe was ready to descend upon its neck.

The *Rabfak* candidates themselves looked as if they were being prepared for sacrifice to the "innumerable gods of necessity and fate." Karabanov never left my side, smiling and saying:

"Life's like that—something's always wrong. It's the greatest good fortune to get into the *Rabfak*, it's a dream, you might say, it's what everybody's always looking for,

it's God knows what! But when you come up against it, perhaps it isn't, after all! Perhaps really our happiness is ending today. It's sad to leave the colony, so sad. . . . I could howl—if it weren't for people seeing me, how I'd howl! Perhaps I'd feel better if I could! There's no such thing as truth in the world!"

Vershnev, angry-eyed, regards us from a corner of the office.

"There's only one truth—human beings."

"I like that!" laughed Karabanov. "D'you mean you've been looking for truth among cats?"

"N-n-n-no, it isn't that . . . it's that people have got to be good, or else what the hell's the good of truth? You see, if a person's a swine, he'll be a nuisance when we reach socialism, too. That's what I've learned today."

I looked intently at Nikolai.

"Why today?"

"Today you can see people like in a mirror. I don't know how it is: everything used to be just work, and every day a working day, and today everything is suddenly c-c-c-clear. Gorky wrote the truth, but I couldn't understand it before, at least I did understand it, but I didn't realize how important it was. A Man—that's not just any rotter! And it's true—there are some who are just ordinary people, and some who are real men."

With words like these the *Rabfak* candidates tried to conceal the fresh wounds inflicted by their departure from the colony. But their efforts were less strenuous than ours, for the luminous *Rabfak* awaited them, while nothing luminous awaited us.

The night before, the teachers had gathered together in the porch of my apartment, some seated, others standing, all thinking and huddling shyly together. The colony was asleep, and the night was still, warm, and starry. The world seemed to me a sort of magic potion of the most complex consistency—delicious, seductive. But it was impossible to resolve it into its ingredients, and no one could tell what bitternesses were dissolved in it. At such moments a man is beset by philosophical conjectures, by the longing to grasp the incomprehensible. And if the morrow

is to carry away "forever" the friends whose social development he has, not without difficulty, helped to create out of chaos, a man is apt to gaze speechlessly into the calm sky, and almost, at moments, to believe that the nearby poplars, willows, and lime trees are whispering the solutions to his problems.

And we, a helpless huddle of mortals, each of us individually, and all of us together, maintained silence, indulging in our own thoughts, listening to the whispering of the leaves, and looking into the eyes of the stars. It is thus that savages behave after an unsuccessful hunt.

And there was I, thinking, thinking with the rest. On that night, the night on which I turned out my first real batch of graduates, I indulged in a lot of nonsensical meditations. I told nobody of them at the time, and it probably seemed to my colleagues that they alone had weakened, that I remained unshakable, sturdy and deep-rooted as an oak. They may even have been ashamed to show their weakness in my presence.

I thought how full of hardship and injustice my life had been. How I had sacrificed the best period of my life simply that half a dozen "delinquents" might enter a *Rabfak*, how at the *Rabfak*, and in the big town, they would come under new influences, which I could not control . . . and who could tell how it would all end? Perhaps my labour and my sacrifices would turn out to have been simply a useless clot of misapplied energy!

And I thought of other things, too. Why all this injustice? Hadn't I done good work myself? Hadn't it been a hundred times harder and more worth while than singing songs at a club concert, or even acting in a good play, even in such a theatre as the Moscow Art Theatre? Why, then, should actors be applauded by vast audiences, why should they retire to rest in their own homes, conscious of human attention and gratitude, and I have to while away the dark night in a god-forsaken labour colony? Why did no one, not even the inhabitants of Goncharovka, applaud *me*? Not only this—I was perpetually reverting anxiously to the fact that I had spent a thousand rubles for the outfitting of my *Rabfak* candidates, that such expenditure was not provided for in our budget, that the inspector from the Department of Finance had looked at

me severely and critically, saying in answer to my inquiry:

"Lay out the money, if you like, but bear in mind that any deficit will have to come out of your own salary."

The memory of this conversation made me smile. A whole department suddenly set to work in my brain. In one room someone was eagerly composing savage philippics against the inspector, in the next room was a daredevil loudly exclaiming: "What the hell!" and next door, bending over the tables, an obsequious rabble seemed to be calculating how many months it would take to cover the deficit of one thousand rubles out of my salary. This department worked conscientiously, despite the fact that other departments were also working in my brain. In a neighbouring building a solemn meeting was being held, all our teachers and *Rabfak* students were on the platform, an orchestra a hundred strong was thundering out the "Internationale," and a learned pedagogue was making a speech.

Once again I could smile. What on earth could the learned pedagogue have to say that was of any use? *He* hadn't seen Karabanov, revolver in hand, on the high-road, or Burun perched on someone else's window sill—Burun the agile burglar, whose companions in burglary had been shot. What had he seen?

"What are you thinking about all the time?" Ekaterina Grigoryevna asked me. "Thinking and smiling."

"I'm holding a solemn meeting," I said.

"That's obvious. But now just tell us what we're going to do without a nucleus?"

"Aha! Another field for the future science of pedagogics—the field of nuclei!"

"What field?"

"I'm talking about the nucleus. If there's a collective, there has to be a nucleus."

"It all depends what sort of nucleus."

"The sort we require. We must have a higher opinion of our collective, Ekaterina Grigoryevna. Here we are worrying about a nucleus, and the collective has already produced one without our so much as noticing it. A good nucleus multiplies by division. Put that down in the notebook for the future science of education."

"All right, I will," agrees Ekaterina Grigoryevna meekly.

The next day the teaching collective was listless, and the celebration went off in a stiff, official manner. I had no desire to intensify this mood, and acted as if I were on the stage, impersonating a cheerful individual celebrating the attainment of his most cherished desires.

At noon we dined at the festive tables and, somewhat to our own surprise, there was much laughter. Lapot, acting the parts, showed what our *Rabfak* candidates would be in seven or eight years. He showed us engineer Zadorov, dying of consumption, with doctors Burun and Vershnev at his bedside, sharing the fee, while the musician Krainik came in demanding immediate payment for the funeral march, which, otherwise, he threatened not to play. But both in our laughter and Lapot's jokes, it was not so much genuine amusement, as well-trained will-power, that prevailed.

At three o'clock we lined up and brought out the colours. The *Rabfak* candidates ranged themselves on the right flank. Anton came out of the stables driving Molodets, and the younger boys loaded the cart with the baskets of the departing ones. The command was given, the drums rolled, and the column set out for the station. Half an hour later we emerged from the shifting sandy valley of the Kolomak, and entered with relief upon the tough, short grass of what had once been a spacious highroad, traversed long ago by Tatars and Dnieper Cossacks. The drummers squared their shoulders, and the sticks in their hands became lighter and more spirited.

"Dress the line! Heads up!" I commanded sternly.

Karabanov turned without stopping or losing step, displaying his unique talent of conveying in a simple smile his pride, his joy, his love, his confidence in his own powers, his own splendid future. Zadorov, who was marching beside him, understood his movement immediately, and hastened shyly, as always, to conceal his emotion, merely directing a swift, animated glance at the horizon, and looking up at the banner. Suddenly Karabanov broke out into shrill, buoyant singing. The others, delighted, took up the song. Immediately all within me was as festive as a May Day parade. I seemed to feel

that the colonists shared my mood; the great fact had suddenly dawned on us—the Gorky Colony was seeing off its first and best. It was to do them honour that the silken banner rippled, the drums thundered, the columns swayed in their stately march; the sun, which seemed to be glowing with joy, sank into the west as if making way for us, as if singing a sweet song with us, a cunning song, that seemed to be about an enamoured Cossack, but was really about the detachment of *Rabfak* students leaving for Kharkov, on the orders given yesterday by the Commanders' Council to the "seventh mixed detachment under the command of Alexander Zadorov." The boys enjoyed their own singing, and kept casting sidelong glances towards me—they were glad I was enjoying myself with them.

Eddies of dust had long been revolving in the distance behind us and soon we could make out a rider in its midst. It was Olya Voronova.

Jumping down, she offered her horse to me.

"Get up! It's a good saddle—a real Cossack one. I was nearly late."

"I'm no General," I said. "Let Lapot ride, he's S.C.C.* now."

"Right!" said Lapot, and, clambering into the saddle, he moved to the front of the column, swaying in his seat, and twisting a nonexistent moustache.

The command "at ease" had to be given, partly to enable Olya to have her say, and partly because Lapot's antics were too much for the colonists.

At the station a mood of solemn melancholy, streaked with reckless gaiety, prevailed. The students got into their carriage, and looked proudly down upon our ranks and the people on the platform—these latter somewhat agitated by our arrival.

When the second signal had been given, Lapot made a brief speech:

"See you don't let us down, sons! Shurka, you keep them in order, and don't forget to send this carriage to a museum. And let there be an inscription on it: 'In this carriage Semyon Karabanov went to the *Rabfak*.'"

* Secretary of the Commanders' Council.—*Tr.*

We went back by the meadows, by narrow footpaths and planks laid across streams, every now and then jumping brooks and ditches. This caused us to break up into small friendly groups, and under cover of the falling dusk, souls were turned inside out and displayed, in no boastful spirit. Said Gud:

"I'm not going to any *Rabfak*. I'm going to be a shoemaker, and make good shoes. Is that any worse? Not a bit! But it is sad the kids have left us, isn't it?"

Gnarled, bowlegged, massive Kudlaty regarded Gud sternly.

"You'll make a rotten shoemaker, too," he said. "You put a patch on for me last week, and it had come off by the evening. That sort of cobbler is worse than a doctor. A good cobbler, now, he might be better than a doctor."

An exhausted stillness prevailed in the colony that evening. And then, just when the signal "Bedtime" had been given, Osadchy, the commander on duty, brought in Gud—drunk. Or maybe not so much drunk, as lyrically sentimental. Paying no heed to the general indignation, he stood in front of me and said softly, gazing at my inkstand:

"I've been drinking, because it's the right thing to do. I may be a shoemaker, but I have a soul, haven't I? I have. Can I bear it quietly when Zadorov and so many of our boys have gone the devil knows where? I can't bear it quietly. So I just went and drank on my own earnings. Did I put soles on the miller's boots? I did. I drank on my own earnings. Did I cut anybody's throat? Did I insult anybody? Did I so much as lay a finger on a girl? I did not lay a finger. And he starts yelling: 'Come on to Anton! Come on, then!' Who's this Anton? Is it you, Anton Semyonovich? Who is it? A wild beast? No, it's not a wild beast. What sort of a man is he—perhaps he's a worthless man? No, he's not a worthless man. Very well, then. I've come. Here I am. You see before you the bad shoemaker Gud."

"Are you in a state to listen to what I say?"

"I am. I can listen to what you say."

"Very well, then, listen! To make boots, that's a necessary, a fine thing. You'll be a good shoemaker, and

you'll become the director of a boot factory so long as you don't drink."

"Not even when such a lot of people leave us?"

"Not even then."

"So, in your opinion, I've been wrong to drink."

"You've been wrong."

"And since we can't do anything about it now," here Gud's head dropped low, "you'll have to punish me."

"Go to bed. I won't punish you this time."

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Gud to the onlookers. Then, with a scornful glance around, he saluted in the colonist way:

"Very good, Comrade!"

Lapot took him by the arm and led him solicitously to the bedroom, as if he felt him to be the quintessence of the colony's grief.

Half an hour later Kudlaty came to my office to see about the issue of boots for the autumn. He drew the new boots lovingly out of the box, allotting them according to the colonists' detachments on his list. There were constant cries:

"When are you going to change them? These are tight for me!"

Kudlaty answered again and again, till he lost patience, and shouted:

"I've told you over and over again—I'm not going to change today, tomorrow they can be changed. Block-heads!"

Seated at my desk, the weary Lapot, screwing up his eyes, said to Kudlaty:

"Salespeople and customers must be mutually courteous, Comrade."

12

AUTUMN

Winter drew round once more. By October the endless "burty" had been filled with alternate layers of beets and straw and Lapot proposed to the Commanders' Council:

"Be it resolved: to heave a sigh of relief."

"Burty" are deep trenches, twenty metres long. Sherre had prepared about a dozen such trenches for the winter,

and even then said it wasn't enough, and that we should have to economize in beets.

Each beet had to be laid in its trench as carefully as if it were an optical instrument. Sherre was capable of standing over a mixed detachment from morning till night, nagging at them ceaselessly.

"Don't throw them about like that, comrades, if you please! Bear in mind that if you give a hard knock to a single beet, it will begin to decay, and then it will rot, and the decay will spread to all the rest. Do be careful, comrades, please do!"

Exhausted by the monotony of the work, and thoroughly sick of beets, the colonists never missed an opportunity of making Sherre's admonitions an excuse for distraction and rest. Choosing from the heap a nice-looking, round, pinkish beet, the whole mixed detachment headed by its commander—some Mitka or Vitka—would gather round it, the commander raising his hands with outspread fingers, and saying in a stage whisper:

"Don't go too near! Hold your breath! Who has clean hands?"

Litters would appear. When the commander of the mixed detachment lifted the beet tenderly from the heap, a cry of alarm would be uttered:

"What are you doing? What are you doing?"

All would stop in terror, and nod their heads, when the same voice continued:

"You got to be careful!"

The first pair of overalls that came handy would be rolled up into a soft, comfortable pillow, the pillow placed on the litter, while the rosy, round, well-nourished beet resting on it really was a touching sight. Sherre would chew at a grass-stalk to conceal his smiles. The litter would be lifted from the ground, and Mitka would whisper:

"Gently, comrades, gently! Bear in mind, decay may set in. . . ."

There was a remote likeness to Sherre's voice in that of Mitka, and Eduard Nikolayevich was therefore careful not to throw away his grass-stalk.

The winter ploughing was over. We had only begun to dream of a tractor, and it was quite impossible to do

more than half a hectare a day with a plough and two horses. Sherre, therefore, grew extremely anxious, watching the work of the first and second mixed detachments.

In these detachments worked some of our most experienced colonists, under the command of such "hearts of oak" as Fedorenko, Koryto and Chobot. Possessing strength very little inferior to that of the two plough horses, and knowing the work of ploughing in all its details, these comrades had a happy way of applying the methods of ploughing to other spheres of life also. In the collective, in their friendly relations, and in their private lives, they were fond of the straight, deep furrow, the heavy gleaming clods of earth. And the work of their brains seemed to go on not in their heads but in some other places—in the muscles of their steel-strong hands, in their armoured chests, in their firm monumental thighs. In the colony they held out steadily against the attractions of the *Rabfak*, avoiding with silent scorn all talk on scholastic themes. Their convictions were unshakable, and none of the other colonists had such proudly good-natured gestures, such confidently laconic speech.

As active members of the first and second mixed detachments, these colonists enjoyed the profound respect of all, even though certain wits were not always able to refrain from sarcasms in their regard.

This autumn the first and second mixed detachments got all muddled up over a contest. At that time emulation had not yet become the symbol of Soviet work, and I even had to suffer, in the torture chambers of the Department of Public Education, on its account. My sole justification was that emulation sprang up in our midst spontaneously, and that I had no hand in it myself.

The first mixed detachment worked from six a.m. till noon, and the second from noon till six p.m. The mixed detachments were formed for a week. The next week the combination of the colony's forces in mixed detachments had always changed a little, although there was a certain amount of specialization.

Every day, just as a mixed detachment was finishing its work, Alyosha Volkov, our assistant agronomist, would go out into the field with his two-metre level to ascertain

the number of square metres ploughed by the mixed detachment.

The mixed detachments worked well at ploughing, but the amount done varied according to the soil, the horses, slopes in the ground, the weather, and other external factors. On a board hung for all sorts of announcements, Alyosha Volkov chalked up the figures:

Oct. 19	1st mixed Koryto	. . .	2,350	sq. m.
	1st mixed Vetkovsky	. . .	2,300	" "
	2nd mixed Fedorenko	. .	2,410	" "
	2nd mixed Nechitailo	. .	2,270	" "

Quite spontaneously the boys began to take an interest in comparing the results of their work, each detachment trying to outvie its predecessors. It was discovered that the best commanders, and the most likely to head the list, were Fedorenko and Koryto. They had been close friends for long, but this did not prevent them from following each other's results jealously, and finding all sorts of faults in each other's work. And here Fedorenko reacted to a dramatic experience in a way which made it apparent that he also had his nerves. For some time he had been ahead of the other detachments, his results from day to day ranging on Alyosha Volkov's board from 2,500 to 2,600. Koryto's detachment tried to reach these records, but was always forty or fifty square metres behind, and Fedorenko made fun of his friend.

"Stop it, pal! Anyone can see you're still a young ploughman. . . ."

The horse Dawn fell sick in the end of October, and Sherre only sent one pair into the fields, asking the Commanders' Council to appoint Fedorenko to Koryto's detachment, in order to increase the effectiveness of the work.

At first Fedorenko did not see the dramatic possibilities of the situation, for he had been much worried about Dawn's illness, and the necessity for speeding up the winter ploughing with only one team of horses. He flung himself zealously into the work, only coming to his senses when Alyosha Volkov wrote on the board:

Oct. 24th 2nd mixed Koryto . . . 2,730 sq. m.

The proud Koryto triumphed in his victory and Lapot went about the colony declaring:

"How can Fedorenko compete with Koryto? Koryto's a regular agronomist, what's Fedorenko in comparison to him?"

The boys tossed Koryto in the air with shouts of "hurrah", while Fedorenko, his hands in his trouser pockets, turned pale with envy.

"Koryto an agronomist!" he roared. "I've never seen an agronomist like that before!"

Fedorenko was being continually pestered with innocent questions:

"You admit Koryto won?"

But Fedorenko had been thinking things over. In the Commanders' Council he said:

"What's Koryto swaggering about? There'll be only one team this week, too. Give me Koryto in the first mixed, and I'll show you three thousand metres."

The Commanders' Council was delighted at Fedorenko's resourcefulness, and fulfilled his request. Koryto shook his head.

"Oh, that Fedorenko!" he said. "He's a cunning devil!"

"Mind!" Fedorenko adjured him. "I worked conscientiously for you—you'd better not try any shirking!"

Even before the work had begun, Koryto had to admit that his situation was a difficult one.

"What's to be done? There's Fedorenko to consider, and then there's the ploughing. And if the kids start saying I've let Fedorenko down by not working hard enough, that won't be too good, either."

Fedorenko laughed, and Koryto laughed, going out in the fields the next morning. Fedorenko placed an enormous stick on the plough, to which he drew his friend's attention.

"See that!" he said. "Out in the field I shan't baby you, you know!"

Koryto reddened, at first from the gravity of the situation, and then from laughter.

When Alyosha returned from the field with his level, feeling in his pocket for a bit of chalk, the whole colony came out to meet him, and the lads asked impatiently:

"Well—how was it?"

Alyosha wrote on the board, slowly and silently:

Oct. 26th 1st mixed Fedorenko... 3,010 sq. m.

"Oh, fancy that!—Fedorenko—three thousand!"

Fedorenko and Koryto came back from the field. The boys greeted Fedorenko as a conqueror, and Lapot said:

"Didn't I say Koryto could never compete with Fedorenko? Why, Fedorenko's a regular agronomist!"

Fedorenko looked mistrustfully at Lapot, afraid to say what he thought about Lapot's crafty behaviour, for this all took place not in the fields, but in the yard, and Fedorenko no longer had the confidence he felt when holding the tense, quivering handles of the plough.

"How is it you were beaten, Koryto?" asked Lapot.

"It was irregular, Comrade Colonists! I'll tell you how it was—Fedorenko took a stick into the field, and that's how it was!"

"Of course I took a stick," corroborated Fedorenko. "One has to clean the plough every now and then."

"And he said: 'I shān't baby you.'"

"And why should I baby you? I say it again—what's the use of babying you—you're not a girl?"

"And how many times did he hit you with the stick?" inquired the lads.

"Oh, I was so terrified of the stick, and worked hard, so's he didn't have to use it. And, by the way, you didn't use that stick for cleaning the plough, Fedorenko."

"It was a spare stick, I found a very convenient—er—stick in the field."

"If he never once hit you, you have no grounds for complaint," explained Lapot. "You adopted the wrong policy from the start, Koryto. You should have worked slowly, you know, and argued with the commander. He would have lammed into you with the stick. Then things would have been quite different: the Commanders' Council, the Komsomol Bureau, the general meeting and all that...."

"I didn't think of it," said Koryto.

Thus Fedorenko came off the winner, thanks to his determination and ingenuity.

The autumn drew to an end, abundant, close-packed, dependable. We did miss the colonists who had gone to

Kharkov, but live human beings and days of toil as before brought to nightfall satisfactory portions of laughter and cheerfulness, and even Ekaterina Grigoryevna admitted:

"You know what—our collective's wonderful! It's as if nothing had happened."

I now understood still better that, as a matter of fact, nothing special had happened. The success of our *Rabfak* candidates in the examinations at Kharkov, and the constant feeling that, though they were living and studying in another town, they were still the colonists of the seventh mixed, increased the stock of optimism in the colony. Zadorov, the commander of the seventh mixed, sent regular weekly reports, which were read at our meetings to the accompaniment of a pleasant, approving hum. Zadorov drew up his reports in detail, indicating who was sweating away at what, and adding comments of his own.

"Semyon is thinking of falling in love with a girl from Chernigov. Write and tell him to snap out of it. Vershnev is fussing because medical science isn't taught at the *Rabfak*, and he says he's sick of learning grammar. Tell him to stop putting on airs."

Another time Zadorov wrote:

"Oksana and Rakhil often come to see us. We give them lard, and they help us in all sorts of ways—Kolya has difficulties with his grammar, Golos, with arithmetic. So we want to ask the Commanders' Council to make Oksana and Rakhil members of the seventh mixed. They keep the rules."

And again:

"Oksana and Rakhil have no boots, and no money to buy any. We've had to have our boots repaired, we walk a lot, on pavements all the time. There's nothing left of the money Anton Semyonovich sent, because we had to buy textbooks and a set of draughting instruments for me. Oksana and Rakhil have to buy boots, they cost seven rubles a pair at the market. They feed us all right, here, but unfortunately only once a day,

and we've finished all our lard. Semyon eats a lot of lard. Write and tell him not to eat so much if you send us any more."

At the general meeting the colonists enthusiastically resolved: to send money; to send more lard; to make Oksana and Rakhil members of the seventh mixed; to send them colonists' badges; not to say anything to Semyon about the lard he eats—they had their commander, let the commander issue lard himself, as a commander should; to write to Vershnev not to fuss, and to Semyon to be careful about that Chernigov girl, and not get his head filled with sentimental ideas. If necessary, the Chernigov girl could write to the Commanders' Council herself.

Lapot had a way of making a general meeting business-like, brisk and lively, and could draw up splendid formulas for corresponding with our *Rabfak* students. The idea of the Chernigov girl appealing to the Commanders' Council pleased everyone, and was destined to undergo development in the future.

The life of the seventh mixed in Kharkov brought about a radical change in the tone of our shool. The conviction was forced upon all that the *Rabfak* was a reality—that anyone could get into it, given the desire. And we observed a remarkable influx of energy in school studies from the autumn. Bratchenko, Georgievsky, Osadchy, Schneider, Gleiser, and Marusya Levchenko started working to get into the *Rabfak* in earnest.

Marusya had completely thrown off her hysteria, and during this period had quite fallen in love with Ekaterina Grigoryevna, accompanying her everywhere, helping her when she was on duty, and following her with an ardent gaze. I was pleased to see that Marusya had become a great stickler for neatness in dressing, and had learnt to wear severe high collars, and blouses of the most elegant cut. Marusya was blossoming into a beauty under our very eyes.

In the junior groups, too, the fragrance of the as yet remote *Rabfak* began to distil itself, and the eager juniors were frequently heard inquiring which would be the best *Rabfak* for them to aim at.

Natasha Petrenko attacked her studies with a zeal which was remarkable. She was about sixteen, but still illiterate. From her very first days in our shool she displayed extraordinary ability, and I confronted her with the task of completing her studies for the first and second classes during the winter. Natasha thanked me with a flicker of the eyelashes, saying briefly:

"Why not?"

She had already stopped calling me "Uncle," and was rapidly settling down in the collective. She was beloved by all, for her indefinable beauty of disposition, for her serenely-confiding smile, for the sweetness of her expression. She still kept up her old friendship with Chobot, and Chobot, silently and morosely, still protected this precious creature from foes. But Chobot's position became more and more difficult every day, for there were no foes around Natasha—on the contrary, she began to make friends both among the girls and the boys. Lapot himself adopted quite a new tone towards Natasha—without the slightest sarcasm or tricks, attentive, affectionate, solicitous. Chobot therefore always had to wait for Natasha to be alone, so as to have a talk with her, or rather to hold silent communion with her on certain extremely confidential matters.

I began observing symptoms of growing anxiety in Chobot's bearing, and was not surprised when he came to me one evening and said:

"Anton Semyonovich, let me go and see my brother!"

"I didn't know you had a brother."

"Well, I have. He has a farm somewhere near Bogodukhov. I've had a letter from him."

Chobot handed me the letter. In it was written:

"And as to what you say about your circumstances, you just come to me, my dear brother Mykola Fedorovich, and stay with me, for my hut is a large one, and very few people have a farm like mine, and my heart will rejoice at having found my brother, and since you're fond of the girl, just bring her along, too."

"So I thought I'd go there and see."

"Have you spoken to Natasha?"

"I have."

"Well?"

"What does Natasha understand? I shall have to go and see for myself—I haven't seen my brother since I left home."

"Well, then, you go to your brother, and see for yourself. Your brother's probably a kulak, isn't he?"

"I wouldn't say he was a kulak, he used to keep only one horse. Of course I don't know how things are with him now."

Chobot left in the beginning of December, and was away a long time.

Natasha hardly seemed to notice his absence—serenely reserved as ever, she plodded steadily away at her studies. I realized that this girl could have gone through three classes in the winter.

The new attitude of the colonists towards school completely changed the character of the colony itself. It had become infinitely more civilized, and nearer to the usual scholastic organization. By now it would have been hard to find a single colonist who doubted the necessity and importance of study. This new mood was further keyed up by the feeling for Maxim Gorky which was shared by all. In one of his letters to the colonists, Alexei Maximovich had written:

"I would like my *Childhood* to be read by the colonists in the autumn evenings. From it they will see that I was just like them, only from my early youth I had the sense to stick to my desire to study, and was never afraid of work. I have always believed 'it's dogged as does it!'"

The colonists had long been corresponding with Gorky. Our first letter dispatched with the brief address—"Italia, Sorrento, Massimo Gorky"—was, to our surprise, received by him, and Alexei Maximovich immediately replied to it with a kind, friendly letter, which we read into holes in a week. Ever since, a regular correspondence had been kept up between us. The colonists wrote to Gorky in detachments, and brought me their letters for "editing," but I considered that no editing was required, and that the more natural they were, the more Gorky would enjoy reading them. And so my work as editor was limited to remarks such as:

"Couldn't you have found a better piece of paper?"
"Where are all the signatures?"

When a letter arrived from Italy every colonist wanted to hold it for a minute, to marvel over the fact that Gorky himself had written the address on the envelope, and to cast a critical eye over the portrait of the king on the stamp.

"How can they stand it so long, those Italians? What's the use of a king?"

Only I was permitted to open the letter and I had to read it aloud once or twice before it could be handed to the secretary of the Commanders' Council and read by admirers to their hearts' content, while Lapot imposed the sole condition:

"Don't pass your fingers under the words. You've got eyes, you can read without your fingers."

The boys derived a whole philosophy of life from every line of Gorky's, all the more convincing since the lines themselves admitted of not the slightest doubt. A book was quite another matter. One could argue about a book, one could denounce a book if it said what was not right. But this was no book, this was a real live letter from Maxim Gorky himself.

At first, the boys regarded Gorky with an almost religious veneration, considering him a creature superior to all others, and the idea of imitating him seemed to them almost blasphemous. They could not believe that it was events from his own life that were described in *Childhood*.

"A writer like him? Look what a lot of life he's seen! Seen, and written about—even when he was a little chap he could never have been just like everybody else."

I had the greatest trouble in persuading the colonists that Gorky had written the truth in his letter, that even a talented person had to work hard and to study. The living features of a living human being, of that very Alyosha whose life was so like that of many of the colonists, became gradually familiar, and comprehensible to us. Then it was that the boys longed still more to see Alexei Maximovich, and dreamt of his coming to the colony, while at the same time never quite believing in the possibility of this.

"Him come to the colony! D'you think you're such a fine chap, better than all the rest? Gorky has thousands like you—no, tens of thousands."

"What about it? D'you think he writes letters to them all?"

"And d'you think he doesn't? He could dash off twenty letters a day—just count up how many that would be a month! Six hundred letters. So you see!"

Regular investigations into this matter were made, and the boys came specially to me to ask how many letters a day I thought Gorky wrote.

"One or two, I should think. And not every day of course," I replied.

"It can't be! He must write more!"

"No, he doesn't! He writes books, and he needs time for that. And how many people go to see him, do you suppose? And what do you think—doesn't he have to rest?"

"So, according to you, if he writes to us, we are his friends—Gorky's friends!"

"Not his friends," I told them, "but Gorkyites. He's our chief. And if we keep on writing to him, and still more, if we meet him, we shall become his friends. Gorky hasn't many such."

The image of Gorky in the colony's collective at last attained normal proportions, and it was only then that I began to observe, not awe before a great man, not the respect due to a great writer, but a real, pulsating love for Alexei Maximovich, and real gratitude on the part of the Gorkyites for this remote, remarkable, but for all that, essentially human personality.

It was extremely hard for the colonists to manifest this love. They did not know how to write letters which should express their love, they even shrank from expressing it, owing to their austere habit of denying expression to all emotion whatsoever. And then Gud and his detachment found a way out. In a letter to Alexei Maximovich they asked him to send his foot measurements, so that they could send him a pair of high boots. The first detachment was quite sure Gorky would fulfil their request, since boots always have their value. Very few people ordered boots from our shoemakers' shop, and when they did, the order gave much trouble, requiring prolonged search at

the market for suitable material, or good lasts, while leather for soles and linings had also to be bought. It needed a good shoemaker to make boots which would not pinch the foot, and which would, at the same time, look smart. Gorky would always find a pair of high boots useful, and, moreover, he would find pleasure in the fact that they had been made by the colonists, and not by some Italian cobbler.

A shoemaker acquaintance from town, considered a great swell in his own line, coming to the colony to have a sack of grain ground, confirmed the colonists in this opinion.

"Italians and Frenchmen don't wear high boots like ours, and they don't know how to make them. But what sort of boots do you mean to make for Gorky? You've got to know what sort he likes—all in one piece, or with a cap?—and what sort of heel and tops. If they're to be soft, that's one thing, but some people like a stiff top. And then, what sort of leather—you'll have to make them of kid, with box-calf tops. The length, now, that's another question."

Overcome by the complexity of the matter, Gud consulted me.

"Supposing the boots turn out rotten! It'll be a bad business. And what sort shall we make—kid, or patent leather? And who's to find patent leather? Me? Perhaps Kalina Ivanovich would. But all he says is, who are you, parasites, to make boots for Gorky? He says Gorky has his boots made by the king's shoemaker in Italy."

Kalina Ivanovich corroborated this statement.

"And did I tell you wrong? There's no such firm as Gud & Co. yet. And you can't make proper boots. He must have a boot that will go over a sock, and won't give him corns. And look how you work! Even when one wraps three layers of rag round the foot, it hurts, the parasite! A fine thing if you were to give Gorky corns!"

Gud fell melancholy, he actually grew thin thinking over all these complications.

The reply came a month later.

"I don't need any boots," wrote Gorky. "I live almost in the country, and you can do without boots here."

Kalina Ivanovich lit his pipe, and threw up his head proudly.

"He's a wise man, he understands that it would be better to go without boots than put on your boots. Even Silanti curses the day he was born when he wears your boots, and he's used to anything."

Gud blinked and said:

"Of course, a good pair of boots can't be made if the shoemaker's here, and the customer's in Italy. Never mind, Kalina Ivanovich, there's plenty of time! If he ever comes to us, you'll see what a pair of boots we'll make him!"

Autumn ran its length peaceably.

The arrival of Lyubov Savelyevna Dzhurinskaya, inspector from the People's Commissariat for Education, was an event. She had come all the way from Kharkov to see the colony, and I received her, as I usually received inspectors, with the caution of a wolf accustomed to being hunted. Maria Kondratyevna, rosy-cheeked and gay, accompanied her.

"Allow me to introduce you to this savage," said Maria Kondratyevna. "I used to think he was an interesting person, myself, but now I know he's simply a saint. He makes me feel awful—my conscience begins to torture me."

Dzhurinskaya took Bokova by the shoulders with the words:

"Off with you—we can do without your frivolity!"

"With pleasure!" agreed Maria Kondratyevna affectionately, her dimples showing. "My frivolity can find people to appreciate it here. Where are your kids? At the river?"

"Maria Kondratyevna!" came Shelaputin's high soprano right from the riverbank. "Maria Kondratyevna! Come here—we have such a fine sleigh!"

"And is there room for us both?" asked Maria Kondratyevna, already on her way to the river.

"Plenty! Kolya's coming, too! But you've got a skirt on, it'll be awkward if you fall."

"Never mind—I know how to fall," cried Maria Kondratyevna, shooting a glance at Dzhurinskaya.

She sped off towards the frozen slope leading to the Kolomak, and Dzhurinskaya, following her with a loving glance, said:

"Strange creature! She feels thoroughly at home with you."

"Worse than that," I replied. "Soon I shall find myself putting her on penalty duty for making too much noise."

"You recall me to my duties. I've come here to talk to you about discipline. So you don't deny that you inflict punishments, those penalty duties . . . then they say there are certain other practices here—arrests . . . is it true that you put your charges on bread and water?"

Dzhurinskaya was a tall woman with an open countenance, and clear, youthful eyes. Somehow I felt that with her I might dispense with anything in the way of diplomacy.

"I don't put anybody on bread and water, but I do sometimes make them go without dinner. Penalty duties too. I put them under arrest sometimes, not in a lockup, of course, but in my office. Your information is correct."

"But look here—all that is forbidden."

"It's not forbidden by the law, and I don't read the writings of all sorts of scribes."

"You don't read works on pedology! D'you mean it?"

"I gave up reading them three years ago."

"You ought to be ashamed! Do you read at all?"

"I read a lot. And I'm not ashamed—bear that in mind! And I'm extremely sorry for those who do read books on pedology."

"I shall have to convert you—really, I shall! We've got to have Soviet pedagogics."

I decided to bring the discussion to an end, and said to Lyubov Savelyevna:

"Look here! I'm not going to argue. I'm profoundly convinced that here, in the colony, we have real Soviet pedagogics. More, that ours is communist education. You can be convinced either by experience, or by serious research—a work on the subject. Such things are not to be decided in mere conversation. Will you be here long?"

"Two days."

"Splendid! You have all sorts of methods at your disposal. You can look about you, talk to the colonists, eat with them, work with them, rest with them. Draw whatever conclusions you like, have me dismissed from my post, if you like. You can write out all your conclusions, and dictate me any method you like. That's your right. But I shall go on doing things the way I consider neces-

sary, and as best I can. I don't know how to educate without punishment, I still have to learn that art."

Lyubov Savelyevna stayed not two, but four days with us, and I scarcely saw her during all that time. The boys said of her:

"Oh, that's a tough dame—she knows what's what!"

During her stay at the colony Vetkovsky came to me.

"I'm leaving the colony, Anton Semyonovich."

"Where will you go?"

"I'll find somewhere. It's getting dull here. I'm not going in for the *Rabfak*, and I don't want to be a carpenter. I'll just go about and have a look at the world."

"And then what?"

"We'll see. You just give me my papers."

"All right. There'll be a Commanders' Council in the evening. The Commanders' Council can decide whether they'll let you go."

At the Commanders' Council Vetkovsky took up a hostile position, endeavouring to limit himself to formal replies.

"I don't like it here. Who's going to make me stay? I shall go wherever I like. It's my business what I shall do. Perhaps I'll steal."

Kudlaty was furious.

"D'you mean it's none of our business? You're to steal, and it's not our business? And supposing I up and give a sock in the jaw for this sort of talk, will you still believe it's none of our business?"

Lyubov Savelyevna turned pale and seemed to be about to speak, but she was too late. The irritated colonists shouted at Vetkovsky. Volokhov stood in front of Kostya.

"You ought to be sent to the hospital! That's all about it! Give him his papers, indeed! Why don't you tell us the truth? Perhaps you've found work?"

Most of all raged Gud.

"We don't have any fences here, do we? No, we don't! Since you're such a rotter—good riddance to you! D'you think we're going to harness Molodets, and go after you? We shan't go after you! Go where you like! What did you come here for?"

Lapot closed the discussion.

"That'll be enough of expressing opinions. It's clear, Kostya—we shan't give you your papers."

Kostya drooped his head, muttering:

"I don't want any papers—I'll go without papers. Give me ten rubles for the way."

"Shall we?" asked Lapot.

All fell silent. Dzhurinskaya became all ears, even closing her eyes as she leaned her head against the back of the sofa. Koval spoke.

"He appealed to the Komsomol organization about this here matter. We turned him out of the Komsomol! But I think we can give him ten rubles."

"Quite right!" came from somewhere. "We don't grudge him ten rubles."

I took out my pocketbook.

"I'll give him twenty rubles. Write out a receipt."

In the midst of general silence, Kostya wrote out a receipt, tucked the money into his pocket, and put on his cap.

"Good-bye, comrades!"

No one answered him. Then Lapot jumped up and shouted after him, just as he was going out:

"Hi, you! When you've spent the twenty rubles, don't be shy, come back to the colony. You can work it off."

The commanders dispersed in vexation. Lyubov Savelyevna came to herself and said:

"How terrible! Someone should have talked to the lad."

Then, after a moment's thought, she added:

"But what a terrible force this Commanders' Council of yours is! What people!"

She left the next morning. Anton brought the sleigh round. In it was some dirty straw, and bits of paper. Lyubov Savelyevna was already seated in the sleigh, when I asked Anton:

"What's all that rubbish in the sleigh?"

"I didn't have time..." muttered Anton, getting red.

"Put yourself under arrest till I come back from town."

"Very good!" said Anton, and moved away from the sleigh. "In the office?"

"Yes."

Anton strolled off to the office, resentful of my severity, and we drove away from the colony. It was not till we

were almost at the station that Lyubov Savelyevna took me by the arm, saying:

"Why such severity? You have a splendid collective. It's a sort of miracle. I'm simply overwhelmed . . . but tell me—are you quite sure that boy of yours—Anton—is under arrest now?"

I looked at Dzhurinskaya in astonishment.

"Anton is a person of great dignity," I said. "Of course he's under arrest. But taking them all round they're a pack of cubs!"

"Don't say that! All because of your Kostya! I'm sure he'll come back. It's marvellous! You get on marvellously! And Kostya's the best of all."

I sighed, and did not answer.

13

THE SEAMY SIDE OF LOVE AND POETRY

The year 1925 began. And it began with unpleasantness.

At the Commanders' Council, Oprishko declared that he wanted to get married, and that old Lukashenko would not give him Marusya unless the colony gave him as good a "dowry" as Olga Voronova had had, and that with such worldly goods Lukashenko was ready to take him into his own home, and they would farm the land together.

At the Commanders' Council Oprishko adopted the unpleasant mien of heir to Lukashenko and a man of position.

The commanders fell silent, not knowing how to take the whole business. At last Lapot, glancing at Oprishko over the point of a pencil which happened to be in his hand, said quietly:

"All right, Dmitro, so what do you think yourself? If you go in with Lukashenko, does it mean you'll become one of the villagers?"

Oprishko looked at Lapot over his shoulder, smiling sarcastically:

"Put it in your own way—a villager."

"And how would *you* put it?"

"We'll see when the time comes!"

"I see," said Lapot. "Well,—who wants to speak?"

Volokhov, the commander of the sixth detachment, took the floor.

"The boys have to think about their own lives, of course. Nobody's going to stick in the colony all their life. And what qualifications have we? Those in the sixth, or the fourth, or the ninth detachments are more or less all right—they can become carpenters, blacksmiths, or flour mill workers. But nobody gets any qualifications whatever in the detachments working in the fields. So if Oprishko wants to be a peasant, let him. But somehow there's something fishy about him. You're a Komsomol, aren't you?"

"What if I am a Komsomol?"

"It seems to me," continued Volokhov, "that it would do no harm to talk this over in the Komsomol organization first. The Commanders' Council must be told how the Komsomols regard it."

"The Komsomol Bureau has its opinion on this matter," said Koval. "The Gorky Colony does not exist for the purpose of breeding kulaks. Lukashenko's a kulak."

"Why do you call him a kulak?" objected Oprishko. "It doesn't mean anything that he has an iron roof to his house."

"And hasn't he two horses?"

"Yes, he has."

"And a farm hand?"

"No, he hasn't."

"What about Sergei?"

"The Department of Public Education sent him Sergei from a children's home for adoption."

"It's all one," said Koval. "Whether he's from the Department of Public Education or not, he's a farm hand just the same."

"If they give him one. . . ."

"Give! A decent person wouldn't accept one!"

Oprishko, who had not expected such a reception, said vaguely:

"Why do you go on like this? You gave Olga. . . ."

Koval had an answer for him.

"Olga was quite a different proposition. In the first place she married one of our own people, she and Pavel

are joining the commune now, and our property will find a good use. And in the second place, as a colonist, Olga was very different from you. And thirdly, it doesn't look well for us to be breeding kulaks."

"And what am I to do, now?"

"Anything you like!"

"No, that won't do!" interposed Stupitsyn. "If they're in love, let them get married. Dmitri can get a 'dowry,' too, so long as he goes not to Lukashenko, but to the commune. Olga will boss the show there."

"Marusya's father won't let her go."

"Let Marusya send her father to the devil."

"She can't do that."

"It means she doesn't love you enough.... She's a kulak anyhow!"

"What's it to do with you, whether she loves me, or whether she doesn't?"

"You see, it *has* something to do with us. It means she's marrying you out of interest.... If she loved you...."

"Perhaps she does love me, but she obeys her father. And she can't join the commune."

"Oh, she can't! Then why should the Commanders' Council worry about her?" retorted Kudlaty roughly. "You want to get in with a kulak, and Lukashenko needs a rich son-in-law in his hut. And why should we care? Declare the Council closed."

Lapot grinned delightedly from ear to ear. "The Council is closed owing to the lukewarm state of Marusya's affections."

Oprishko was dumbfounded. He went about the colony like a thundercloud, bullying the little ones, and the next day got drunk and kicked up a row in the bedroom.

The Commanders' Council met to try Oprishko for drunkenness. Everyone was morose, and Oprishko stood morosely leaning against the wall. Lapot said:

"You're a commander, of course, but you're here on a private charge, and you must stand in the middle."

Such was our custom—the accused must stand in the middle of the room.

Oprishko let his morose glance rove over the chairman's face, and muttered:

"I haven't stolen anything, and I'm not going to stand in the middle."

"We'll make you," said Lapot softly.

Oprishko took a look at the Council, and understood that they would make him. Shoving himself away from the wall, he lurched into the middle of the room.

"All right, then."

"Stand at attention!" ordered Lapot.

Oprishko shrugged his shoulders, and smiled sardonically, but he dropped his arms to his side, and drew himself up.

"And now tell us how you dared to get drunk and raise hell in the bedroom—you, a Komsomol, a commander, and a colonist! Tell us!"

Oprishko had always cultivated two styles—he could swagger with the best, with the air of the utmost recklessness, when it suited him, but was in fact at all times a cautious and canny diplomat. The colonists knew him very well, and Oprishko's meekness astonished no one. Zhorka Volkov, commander of the seventh detachment, only recently promoted to the post formerly held by Vetkovsky, waved his hand toward Oprishko, saying:

"There he goes! All of a sudden he's a reformed character! Now he's a lamb, and tomorrow he'll be swaggering about again."

"Wait—let him speak!" growled out Osadchy.

"What d'you want me to say? I've done wrong,—what more can I say?"

"No, you tell us how you dared!"

Oprishko, his eyes gleaming unctuously, stretched out his arms towards the Council.

"What is there to dare about? I drank to drown my sorrows, and when a man's drunk he can't answer for his actions."

"Oh, can't he?" said Anton. "But you will! You're much mistaken if you think you haven't got to. Turn him out of the colony, that's all! And turn out anybody who gets drunk. And no quarter!"

"But he'll be done for!" said Georgievsky, his eyes widening. "He'll be done for out in the streets."

"Let him, then!"

"It was all from grief, you know! Why are you so hard on a fellow? A fellow is griefstricken, and you bother him with your Commanders' Council!" said Osadchy, with a glance of frank irony at Oprishko's virtuous countenance.

"And Lukashenko won't have him without a few odds and ends," said Taranets.

"What's it to do with us?" cried Anton. "If Lukashenko won't have him, let Oprishko find himself another kulak!"

"Why turn him out?" began Georgievsky irresolutely. "He's an old colonist. It's true he's done wrong, but he can reform. And we mustn't forget that he and Marusya are in love. They must be helped somehow."

"What is he—a waif?" asked Lapot, with astonishment. "Why should he have to reform? He's a colonist."

The floor was taken by Schneider, the new commander of the eighth, Karabanov's successor in this heroic detachment. The eighth detachment boasted such giants of strength as Fedorenko and Koryto. With Karabanov at their head, they had successfully rubbed off each other's awkward corners, and Karabanov could propel them into any task, however difficult, which they would fulfil with Cossack gusto, while holding high the banner of the colony's honour. At first Schneider seemed out of place in the detachment. He had come to it undersized, puny, dusky and ringleted. Since the ancient affair with Osadchy, anti-Semitism had never raised its head in the colony, but the attitude to Schneider for long remained an ironical one. Sometimes his combinations of Russian words and forms were truly comic, and he had little skill in field work. But time passed, and gradually new relationships worked themselves out in the eighth detachment: Schneider became the favourite of the detachment, and the Karabanov heroes were proud of him. Schneider showed himself to be a clever lad, with a deep and sensitive spiritual nature. From his great black eyes he would flood with light the toughest detachment dilemma, always finding the right solution. And while he scarcely added an inch to his stature during his stay in the colony, he became very strong, and developed muscles which enabled him to don without shame the sleeveless vests worn in the summer; and no one had to look after Schneider when the quivering handles of the plough were delivered over

to him. The eighth detachment unanimously promoted him to commandership, and Koval and I interpreted this appointment as follows: "We can hold the detachment together ourselves, but Schneider will be its adornment."

The very day after his appointment to the command Schneider showed that he had not passed through the school of Karabanov for nothing, and he seemed determined to maintain as well as adorn his position. Fedorenko, used to the thunder and lightning of Karabanov, became no less used to the calm and comradely adjurations occasionally directed at him by the new commander.

And now Schneider spoke:

"If Oprishko had been a new boy he might have been forgiven. But now he must not be forgiven on any account whatever. Oprishko has shown that he doesn't care a fig for the collective. Do you think he won't do it again? You all know he will. I don't want Oprishko to be unhappy. What good would that do us? But let him live without our collective, then he'll understand. And others must be shown that we're not going to have kulak tricks like this. The eighth detachment demands his expulsion."

The demand of the eighth detachment was a decisive factor—there were hardly any new members in the eighth detachment. The commanders looked towards me, and Lapot offered me the floor.

"It's a clear case. Anton Semyonovich, tell us what you think."

"Turn him out," I said briefly.

Oprishko realized that there was no help for him, and threw off the cloak of diplomatic reserve.

"Turn me out? Where am I to go? D'you want me to steal? Do you suppose there's no authority above you? I shall go to Kharkov!"

There was laughter in the Council.

"That's a good one! You go to Kharkov! They'll give you some paper or other, and you'll come back to the colony and live here as a full member. You'll have a fine time, fine time!"

Oprishko realized that he had been talking rank nonsense, and remained silent.

"So only Georgievsky is against," said Lapot, his eyes roving over the Council. "Commander on duty!"

"Here!"

It was Georgievsky, drawing himself up, who answered to the command.

"Turn Oprishko out of the colony!"

"Very good!"

Georgievsky saluted in the approved fashion, and nodded towards Oprishko to follow him to the door.

A day later we learned that Oprishko was living at the Lukashenko's hut. We had no idea what were the terms of the agreement between them, but the boys declared that Marusya had had the final word in the matter.

The winter was drawing to its end. In March the younger boys floated down the Kolomak on drifting ice floes, a pleasure accompanied by ducklings which, however inevitable according to the calendar, nevertheless invariably took them by surprise, the forces of nature upsetting them fully dressed from improvised rafts, ice floes, and overhanging branches. There was of course the usual number of influenza victims.

But the influenza passed, the mists lifted, and soon Kudlaty was beginning to find padded coats lying about in the middle of the yard, and to make the usual spring-time scenes, threatening everyone with shorts and collarless shirts a fortnight earlier than designated by the calendar.

14

"NO WHINING!"

In the middle of April our *Rabfak* students came to us for the spring holidays.

They arrived lean and pallid, and Lapot recommended handing them over to the tenth detachment to be fattened up in the feeding section. I was glad they did not try to show off their student ways in front of the colonists. Karabanov had hardly time to greet everyone before he was running about the farm and the workshops. Belukhin, the little ones hanging round him, told us about Kharkov and the life of the students.

In the evening we sat down beneath the starry sky and discussed the problems of the colony in the good old way. Karabanov was extremely displeased by our latest events.

"It was right to do it, of course," he said. "Since Kostya said he didn't like it here, then you did right—to hell with him, let him find something better! And Oprishko's a kulak, that's obvious, and his place is among kulaks. But still, when you come to think of it, there must be something wrong. We must think it over. In Kharkov, you know, we've seen a different sort of life. Life's different there, and people are different."

"And here in the colony—are our people bad?"

"The people in the colony are good," said Karabanov, "very good. But just look round, and you'll see there are more kulaks every day. How can the colony go on living here? You have to keep on snapping and snarling, or else make off."

"That's not the point," drawled Burun thoughtfully. "We must all fight the kulaks. That's a special matter. That's not the point just now. The point is that there's nothing to do in the colony. There are a hundred and twenty colonists, plenty of workers—and what is the work? Sowing and harvesting, sowing and harvesting. Oceans of sweat for a very small result. It's all so petty. . . . Another year of it and the boys will be bored and start yearning for something better."

"Grisha's right!" Belukhin moved closer to my side. "Our fellows, the waifs, as we're called, are proletarians, it's industrial work they need. Of course, it's jolly and all that to work in the fields, but what do we get out of the fields? If we go into the village, it means we join the petty bourgeoisie, that seems a shame, and then one can't go empty-handed to them, one has to own the means of production—a hut, a horse, a plough, and all that. It won't do to get oneself taken into a kulak family like Oprishko. And where are we to go? There's nothing but the engine-repair works, and the workers there don't know what to do with their own children."

All the *Rabfak* students threw themselves joyfully into work in the fields, and the Commanders' Council, with exquisite courtesy, appointed them commanders of mixed detachments. Karabanov returned from the field in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, how I love work in the fields! What a pity that there's no sense in it, damn it! Wouldn't it be nice if you

could work in the fields, and reap, and have textiles growing up, and boots, fields of machines, tractors, accordions, spectacles, watches, cigarettes waving in the wind. . . . My, my! . . . Why didn't the rotters consult me when they made the world!"

The *Rabfak* students were to spend the First of May with us. This added much to a holiday that was in itself a joyful one for us.

The colony as before woke up in the morning to the sound of the bugle, and the mixed detachments set off into the field in marching order, never looking back, or wasting energy on analyzing life. Even the most backward ones—Evgenyev, Nazarenko, Perepelyatchenko, and a few others—had begun to catch up with the rest, and were no longer a worry.

By the summer of 1925, the colony had grown into a perfectly compact collective, and, moreover, a very healthy-spirited one—from the outside, at any rate. But Chobot was an obstacle to our progress, and I could not manage him.

Returning from his visit to his brother in March, Chobot told us that his brother was fairly prosperous, but that he had no farm hands—he was a middle peasant. Chobot did not ask the colony for any help, but raised the question about Natasha.

"What's the use of talking to me," I said. "Natasha must decide for herself."

A week later he came to me again, in a state of utmost excitement.

"I can't live without Natasha! Talk to her—tell her to come with me!"

"Listen, Chobot, you're a funny chap! It's you who must talk to her—not me!"

"If *you* tell her to go, she'll go, but when *I* do, nothing comes of it, somehow."

"What does she say?"

"She doesn't say anything, she just cries."

Chobot gazed at me tensely alert. It was of importance for him to see what impression his communication had made on me. I could not conceal from him that it had made a painful impression.

"That's no good," I said. "I'll have a talk with her."

Chobot looked at me from bloodshot eyes, looked into the very depth of my being, and said hoarsely:

"Talk to her. But bear in mind—if Natasha doesn't come I'll do away with myself!"

"What's this idiotic talk?" I shouted at him. "Are you a man or are you a mere milksop? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

But Chobot did not let me finish what I was saying. He flopped on to the bench, and wept tears of inexpressible grief and despair. I regarded him in silence, laying my hand on his burning forehead. Suddenly he leaped up, seized me by the elbow, and poured out a current of hurried, confused words:

"I'm sorry . . . I know I'm a nuisance . . . but there's nothing else I can do . . . you see I'm the sort of chap . . . you see everything and know everything . . . I'll go down on my knees . . . I can't live without Natasha!"

I spent the whole night talking to him, and feeling all through the night my own helplessness. I told him of the great life, the bright prospects, the variety of human happiness. I talked to him about the need of carefulness and planning, of Natasha's need to study, her remarkable gifts, how she would help him, too, and must not be buried in a remote Bogodukhov village, where she would die of boredom. But none of this reached Chobot's consciousness. He listened to my words morosely, and only whispered:

"I'll work my head off, I'll do anything, if only she'll come with me!"

I left him in his former state of confusion, a being who had lost his controls and brakes. The next evening I asked Natasha to come to me. She heard my short question out with the merest vibration of the eyelashes, then lifted her eyes to my face, and said, in a voice of the most brilliant purity, quite devoid of any shame:

"Chobot saved me . . . but now I want to study."

"So you don't want to marry him, and go with him?"

"I want to study. But if you tell me to go. I'll go."

I looked once again into those clear, open eyes, intending to ask her whether she knew what Chobot's mood was. But somehow I could not, and said instead:

"All right, you go quietly to bed."

"So I'm not to go?" she asked childishly, holding her head a little on one side.

"No, you're not to go, you're to study," I replied moodily, and fell to thinking, so that I did not even notice how she went quietly out of the office.

Chobot I saw the next morning. He was standing at the main entrance to the White House, obviously waiting to see me. I invited him into the office with a nod of my head. He followed my movements in silence as I was fidgeting with the keys and drawers of my desk, and then said suddenly, as if to himself:

"So Natasha's not going!"

I glanced up at him, and realized that he was aware of nothing but his loss. Leaning one shoulder up against the door, he fixed his gaze on a pane of glass in the top corner of the window, whispered something.

"Chobot!" I shouted.

He did not seem to hear me, but straightened himself and went away without looking back at me, silent and light-footed as a ghost.

I kept my eye on him. After dinner he took his place in the mixed detachment. In the evening I called his commander, Schneider.

"How's Chobot?"

"He's keeping mum."

"How did he work?"

"Commander of the mixed detachment Nechitailo says he worked well."

"Don't take your eyes off him for the next few days. If you notice anything, tell me immediately."

"I know—of course I will," said Schneider.

Chobot maintained silence for several days, but went about his work, and made his appearance in the dining room. He seemed to shun me. On the eve of the holiday I gave an order entrusting him personally to put up slogans on all the buildings. He conscientiously got out the ladder and came to me with a request.

"Give me an order for nails."

"How many?"

He raised his eyes to the ceiling, whispered something, and replied:

"A kilogram will be enough, I think."

I checked up on his work. He was conscientiously and carefully straightening the slogans, and saying to his comrade on the next ladder:

"Higher . . . a little more. . . . That'll do. . . . Nail it on!"

The colonists were fond of holiday preparations, and loved the First of May best of all, because it was a spring holiday. But this year the First of May arrived in a sorry state. It had been raining the day before from the early morning. It would stop for half an hour, and start drizzling again, a fine, dull, persistent rain, as in the autumn. But in the evening the stars began to twinkle in the sky, and the only spot of gloom was a dull, dark-blue bruise in the west, which cast an unfriendly, dingy shadow over the colony. The colonists ran all over the place so as to be finished before the meeting with all sorts of jobs—costumes, the hairdress, the bath, clean linen. On the fast-drying porch the drummers were cleaning the brass fittings of their instruments with chalk. These were tomorrow's heroes.

Our drummers were very unusual. These were no half-baked performers of Pioneer detachments, producing a confused torrent of sound. Not for nothing had the Gorky drummers been having lessons for six months from the regimental performers, and nobody but Ivan Ivanovich had protested.

"They have an appalling method, you know—appalling!" he told me.

Ivan Ivanovich, his eyes transfixed with horror, described this method to me. It consisted in a marvellous jingle, in which figured a wench, tobacco, cheese, and tar, and one other word which is unquotable, but did yeoman service in the drumming line. This "appalling method" did its business, and the marches of our drummers were distinguished by beauty and expressiveness. There were several of them—"The March," "Reveille March," "March of the Colours," "Review March," "Fighting March,"—and each has its particular trills, its sharp neat staccatoes, muffled tender rumblings, sudden explosive phrases, and playful dance rhythms. Our drummers did their work so well that even inspectors from the Department of Public Education, upon hearing them, were forced to admit that

they did not introduce any particularly alien ideology into the cause of social education.

In the evening, at the meeting of the colonists, we checked upon our preparedness for the holiday, and only one detail could not be finally elucidated—would there be rain tomorrow? There were facetious proposals to include in the order for the day: monitor is expected to guarantee good weather. I said I was sure it would rain, and Kalina Ivanovich and Silanti, and other weather experts were of the same opinion. But the colonists protested against our fears, shouting:

“Well, what if it does?”

“You’ll get wet.”

“We’re not made of sugar, are we?”

I was compelled to take a vote on the question whether we were to go to town if it rained from the morning. Three hands were raised against, one of which was my own. The meeting laughed triumphantly, and someone yelled:

“Our side wins!”

After this I said:

“Remember now, it’s been resolved we’re to go, even if it rains rocks.”

“Let it!” shouted Lapot.

“See you don’t whine, then! You may be very brave today, and tomorrow droop your tails and whine: ‘Oh, it’s wet! Oh, it’s cold!...’”

“Do we ever whine?”

“That’s settled then—no whining!”

“Very good—no whining!”

Morning confronted us with a grey, lowering sky, and gentle, treacherous rain, sometimes increasing into water-spouts and flooding the earth, and then once more silently drizzling. There was not the slightest hope of sunshine.

In the White House I was met by the colonists in marching array; they peered with curiosity into my face, but I assumed a stony mask, and soon ironical reminiscences began to be heard here and there: “No whining!”

The standard-bearer was sent to me, evidently by way of reconnoitring.

“Are we to take the banner?”

“How can we go without the colours?”

"You see—it's raining."

"D'you call that rain? Keep the cover on till we get to the town."

"Very good!" said the standard-bearer meekly.

At seven o'clock the bugles were sounded. The column set off for the town punctually to schedule. It was ten kilometres to the centre of the town, and with every kilometre the rain increased in its strength. We found no one in the town square, it was obvious that the demonstration had been cancelled. On the way back the rain had become a torrent, but we no longer cared: everyone was wet through, and the water was pouring out of my boots as from a brimming pail. I halted the column, and said to the boys:

"The drums are wet—let's have a song. I must draw your attention to the fact that some of the ranks are in bad order, marching out of step, and another thing—you must hold your heads higher."

The colonists roared with laughter. The rain was running in rivulets down their faces.

"Forward—march!"

Karabanov started off with a song that seemed so highly appropriate to the situation that the song, too, was met with laughter.

*Things are getting worse and worse,
But we don't give a tinker's curse.*

By the second round the song was taken up and sent floating out over the deserted, rainflooded streets.

Chobot marched by my side in the first row. He neither sang nor took any notice of the rain, staring stubbornly ahead of him at some point beyond the drummers, and quite unaware of my steady observation of him.

When we got past the station I allowed them to break ranks. No one had a single dry cigarette or wad of plug tobacco, and so everyone pounced upon my leather cigarette case. I was surrounded, and reminded proudly:

"Still, nobody whined!"

"Wait a bit, the rocks will begin to come down when we get round that corner—then what'll you say?"

"Rocks won't be so good, of course," said Lapot. "But

there are worse things than rocks—machine guns, for example.”

Before entering the colony grounds we again lined up, formed ranks, and resumed our singing, although it was extremely difficult for the singers to drown the increasing noise of the pouring rain, while, like a pleasant surprise, like a salute to us on our return, the first thunder of the year pealed out. We entered the colony with heads proudly erect, at a brisk march. As always, we saluted the colours, and only then all made to run for the bedrooms. But I shouted out to them:

“Long live the First of May! Hurrah!”

The boys tossed their wet caps into the air, shouting, and, not waiting for the command, rushed up to me. They tossed me up into the air, and fresh streams of water ran on to me from my boots.

An hour later, yet another slogan was nailed up in the club. There were only two words written on a lengthy streamer: “No Whining!”

15

DIFFICULT DAYS

Chobot hanged himself on the evening of May the 3rd.

I was awakened in the early morning by the night-watch detachment, and I guessed what had happened as soon as I heard the rap on the window pane. They had just cut Chobot down, close to the stables, and were trying, by the light of lanterns, to bring him back to life. After prolonged efforts Ekaterina Grigoryevna and the boys had managed to restore his breathing, but he never regained consciousness, and died towards evening. The doctors called from the town explained to us that it would have been impossible to save Chobot. He had hanged himself from the ledge over the stables—standing on this ledge, he had evidently placed and tightened the noose round his neck, and then jumped, the fall breaking the spinal cord in his neck.

The boys received the news of Chobot's suicide guardedly. No one expressed any special grief, though Fedorenko said:

"Poor Cossack—he would have made a good Budyonny soldier!"

But Lapot answered Fedorenko:

"He would never have made a Budyonny soldier! He lived and died a kulak, and it was greed which killed him."

Koval looked with scornful ire towards the club, where Chobot's coffin stood, refused to be one of the guard of honour around it, and did not come to the funeral.

"I would hang fellows like Chobot myself—getting under people's feet with their idiotic affairs."

Only the girls cried, and even then Marusya Levchenko would dry her eyes, and exclaim wrathfully:

"The fool, the blockhead! How d'you like that—go and keep house with him, indeed! What a bit of luck for Natasha! A good thing she didn't go with him! There's plenty of Chobots in the world—she can't make them all happy! Let a few more of them hang themselves!"

Natasha was not crying. She looked at me with terrified astonishment when I went to the girls in their bedroom and asked in a low voice:

"What am I to do now?"

Marusya answered her for me.

"Perhaps *you'd* like to go and hang yourself! Be thankful that fool had the sense to get out of the way! He would have tortured you your whole life if he had lived. What's she to do, indeed! When you're in the *Rabfak*, there'll be time enough to think. . . ."

Natasha raised her eyes to the wrathful Marusya, and snuggled up to her.

"All right, then."

"I'll be Natasha's guardian," said Marusya, looking at me with defiantly blazing eyes.

I bowed, scraping my foot facetiously.

"Oh, do Comrade Levchenko," I said, "and may I join in with you?"

"Only if you promise not to hang yourself! You know there are guardians who are absolutely worthless. Not so much guardians as nuisances!"

"Very good!" I replied, saluting. "I'll try to avoid the noose."

Natasha broke away from Marusya and smiled at her new guardians, even flushing up a little.

"Come and have breakfast, poor little girl," said Marusya gaily.

My heart was somewhat easier about this aspect of the matter.

In the evening there arrived the coroner and Maria Kondratyevna. I persuaded the coroner not to interrogate Natasha, and he showed himself a man of tact, merely drawing up a brief statement, and, after eating the dinner we gave him, taking his departure. Maria Kondratyevna remained behind to mourn. Very late, when everyone was asleep, she came into my office with Kalina Ivanovich, and sank wearily on to the sofa.

"Your colonists are brutes! Their comrade dies, and they go on laughing! And that Lapot of yours fools about just as before."

The next day I went to see the *Rabfak* students off. On the way to the station Vershnev expressed his thoughts and feelings:

"The fellows d-d-d-on't understand what it's all about. A m-m-man decides to die because life is not good. They think it's b-b-b-because of Natasha, it's just his life he couldn't bear."

Belukhin wagged his head.

"Nothing of the sort! Chobot would never have had a decent life. He wasn't a man, he was a slave. There aren't any more masters, so he tried to make a kind of god of Natasha."

"You're going too deep into things, lads," said Semyon. "I don't like that! A fellow hangs himself, very well,—strike him off the rolls! We must think of the morrow. I tell you what: the colony had better get the hell out of here, before you all begin hanging yourselves."

On the way back I pondered over the paths open to our colony. A full-grown crisis seemed to have sprung up in our midst, and many of the things I valued most were threatening to hurl themselves into an abyss—things bright and living, created almost miraculously during five years of work by the collective, things the immense value of which no conventional modesty could make me conceal from myself.

In a collective like ours the obscurity of individual paths could not form a crisis. Individual paths are never clearly defined. And what could a clearly defined individual path imply? Nothing but isolation from the collective, concentrated pettiness—the old tedious thought of where bread for the morrow was to come from, of the eternally vaunted qualifications. And what qualifications? Carpenter, cobbler, miller. . . . No, no, I am perfectly convinced that for a sixteen-year-old boy in our Soviet life the most precious qualification is the qualification of the fighter and the human being.

I thought of the strength of the colonists' collective, and suddenly I realized what was wrong. Why, of course—how could I have taken so long to discover it? It had all come about because we were at a standstill. A standstill can never be allowed in the life of a collective.

I was as happy as a child. How wonderful! What marvellous, all-embracing dialectics! A free working collective can never mark time. The universal law of general development was only just beginning to show its true strength. The forms ruling the existence of a free human collective implied progress. The forms ruling death—a standstill.

Yes, for almost two years we had been at a standstill—the same fields, the same flower beds, the same carpentry shop, and the same yearly round.

I hurried back to the colony to look into the eyes of the colonists and test my great discovery.

At the porch of the White House two hired cabs were standing, and Lapot met me with the information:

“A commission from Kharkov has come.”

“That's good,” thought I. “We'll get this matter settled right away.”

Three persons were waiting for me in my office: Lyubov Savelyevna Dzhurinskaya; another woman, stout and no longer young, but with bright, steady eyes, in a dark crimson dress past its first freshness; and an insignificant individual, betwixt blonde and carrot, who had either no beard at all, or a very little one. He held a briefcase in one hand, and his glasses sat very much awry, so that he was always having to straighten them with the other hand.

Lyubov Savelyevna forced a cordial smile, while introducing me to her companions.

"And here's Comrade Makarenko! Let me introduce you! Varvara Victorovna Bregel, Sergei Vasilyevich Chaikin."

I had nothing against receiving in the colony Varvara Victorovna, who was the highest authority over me, but why this Chaikin? I had heard of him as a professor of pedagogics. Was he perhaps the manager of some children's home?

"We've come specially to look into your method," said Bregel.

"I protest categorically," I said. "There's no such thing as *my* method."

"What method do you use then?"

"The usual Soviet method."

Bregel smiled sourly.

"It may be Soviet, but it certainly isn't a very usual one. We must look into it, however."

Then began one of those highly unpleasant conversations, in which people play with terminology, in the full conviction that terminology can define reality. To cut it short, I said:

"I'm not going to talk like this. If you like I'll make you a report, but I warn you it won't take less than three hours."

Bregel agreed to this. We sat down there and then in the office, and locked ourselves in, while I applied myself to the desperate task of putting into words the impressions, conceptions, doubts and experiments accumulated during the period of five years. It seemed to me that I was speaking eloquently, finding precise expression for extremely subtle ideas, using the dissecting knife with bold caution in spheres hitherto mysterious, throwing down lines for the future, and for the difficulties of the morrow. At any rate I was absolutely sincere, sparing nobody's prejudices, and not afraid to show that "theory" seemed to me in certain of its aspects to have become both ineffective and alien.

Dzhurinskaya listened to me with a joyful, burning countenance, Bregel remained inscrutable, and I did not worry my head over Chaikin. When I had finished

Bregel rapped with her plump fingers on the table, and said in a manner which made it hard to say whether she was being sincere or sarcastic:

"Aha . . . very interesting, I must say, exceedingly interesting. Isn't it, Sergei Vasilyevich?"

Chaikin tried to straighten his spectacles, bent over his writing pad, and, very courteously, as becomes a scholar, with all sorts of mincing grimaces, and a flimsy assumption of respect, uttered the following speech:

"Of course all this needs thorough elucidation . . . but even on the face of it I feel a certain doubt about some of the—er—theorems, which you have been good enough to expound to us with an enthusiasm which, of course, testifies to your sincerity. Very well. For example, a thing we already knew, but you seem to have passed over in silence—a certain, as it were, competition has been organized here, between your charges: the one who does the most gets praised, the one who does the least is blamed. You ploughed your fields, and there was such competition, wasn't there? You said nothing about this, probably unintentionally. I should like to hear from you whether you are aware that we consider competition a method grossly bourgeois, inasmuch as it substitutes for the direct attitude to things, an indirect one. That's one thing. And then—you give pocket money to your charges, on red-letter days, of course,—and the amount of the pocket money is not the same for everyone, but varies in accordance, so to say, with each one's deserts. Doesn't it seem to you that you are substituting for the inner stimulus an external one, and a grossly materialist one at that? To proceed: punishment, as you style it. You must be aware that punishment breeds slaves, while what we want is a free personality, whose behaviour shall be determined, not by fear of the stick, or any other penal measure, but by inner stimuli, and by political consciousness. . . ."

He said a lot more, this Chaikin. Listening to him, I remembered Chekhov's story about the man who killed a bore with a paperweight. Then I decided that there was no need to kill Chaikin—all he needed was a good whipping, not with a birch, of course, or any such old-regime instrument of chastisement as a whip, but with an ordinary belt, such as a worker keeps his trousers up

with. That would have been the ideologically correct way. Bregel, interrupting Chaikin, asked me:

"What are you smiling at? Is it funny, what Comrade Chaikin says?"

"Oh, no," I said. "It's not a bit funny."

"Is it sad, then?" said Bregel, for the first time herself smiling.

"No! Certainly not! It's not sad either. It's just commonplace."

Bregel gazed at me attentively, and sighed.

"We make it hard for you, don't we?" she said humorously.

"Never mind—I'm used to people making things hard for me. Some are even worse."

Bregel suddenly began to shake with laughter.

"You're always joking, Comrade Makarenko," she said, when she had composed herself. "But still, can't you give Sergei Vasilyevich any answer at all?"

I cast an imploring look at Bregel and said:

"I think the Scientific Pedagogical Committee had better take up these questions, too. They do everything the right way there, don't they? Let's have dinner, instead!"

"All right," said Bregel, slightly offended. "Oh, yes, and what's all this about turning out your pupil Oprishko?"

"He has been expelled for drunkenness."

"And where is he now? On the streets, of course!"

"No, he's quite near, living with a kulak."

"D'you mean you sent him there as a ward?"

"Something of the sort," I smiled.

"He's living there? You're sure of that?"

"Yes, I'm quite sure. He's living with a local kulak, Lukashenko. That worthy man already has two other waifs as 'wards'."

"We shall have to look into that."

"Do!"

We went to dinner. After dinner, Bregel and Chaikin desired to look about for themselves, and I took off my cap to Lyubov Savelyevna, with the words:

"Dear, sweet, darling People's Commissariat for Education! We're cramped here, and we've done all we can. We'll all be neurasthenics in six months' time. Give us something big, something to make our heads go round

with work. You've got all sorts of things. Principles aren't all that you have!"

Lyubov Savelyevna laughed, and said:

"I quite understand you. That can be done. Come on, let's talk it over! But wait a bit—you talk of nothing but the future! Are you very offended by this inspection?"

"Oh, not a bit! How could it be otherwise?"

"And the conclusions—don't Chaikin's questions worry you?"

"Why should they? The Scientific Pedagogical Committee will take them up, won't it? It's their funeral!"

That night Bregel told me her impressions before going to bed.

"You have a splendid collective. But just the same your methods are awful."

I rejoiced in the depth of my soul—thank goodness she didn't know how our drummers were trained!

"Good night," said Bregel. "Oh, by the way—no one thinks of blaming you for Chobot's death. . . ."

I bowed in token of my profound gratitude.

16

KNIGHTS OF THE DNIEPER

One more summer came round. Once more, keeping pace with the sun, we went into the fields in mixed detachments, once more the fourth mixed, the Red Banner detachment, was called into action. Burun, as always, at its head.

The *Rabfak* students came to the colony in the middle of June, bringing with them, as well as their triumph at having got their removes, two new members—Oksana and Rakhil—who, as colonists, had no choice in the matter and were bound to come to the colony. And with them came the Chernigov girl, a creature remarkably black-browed and black-eyed. Her name was Galya Podgor-naya. Semyon took her to the general meeting of the colonists, showed her to everyone, and said:

"Shura wrote to the colony that I had taken a fancy to this Chernigov lass. It's all nonsense, word of a Kom-somol, it is! The thing is Galya hasn't any what you might call territory to go to in the holidays. Judge us, Comrade

Colonists, who's in the right, and who's, perhaps, in the wrong."

Semyon seated himself on the ground—the meeting was being held in the park.

The Chernigov girl gazed in amazement at our society—barelegged, bare-armed, and some practically naked. Lapot pursed up his lips, narrowed his eyes, blinked his great, smooth eyelids, and said huskily:

"Be so kind, Comrade Chernigovka, as to tell us . . . er . . . that . . . er. . . ."

The Chernigovka and the whole meeting pricked up their ears.

"... er . . . do you know 'Our Father'?..."

The Chernigov girl smiled, somewhat flustered, blushed, and answered hesitatingly: "No."

"Aha! You don't!" Lapot pursed his lips still more, and again blinked. "And do you know the 'I believe in'?"

"No, I don't."

"M-hm! And could you swim the Dnieper?"

The Chernigov girl looked away in confusion.

"I couldn't say. I'm a good swimmer, I think I could. . . ."

Lapot turned to the meeting with an expression like that on the countenance of a fool trying hard to think: lips pouted, eyelids blinking, one finger raised, nose in the air—and all without the faintest hint of a smile.

"So we'll sum up as follows: 'Our Father' she knows not, 'I believe in'—ditto. She can swim the Dnieper. Or perhaps she can't?"

"She can!" shouted the meeting.

"All right. If she can't swim the Dnieper, can she at least swim the Kolomak?"

"She can! She can!" yelled the laughing boys.

"So it means she'll do for our Knights-of-the-Dnieper Colony?"

"She'll do!"

"Which unit?"

"The fifth!"

"In that case put sand on her head, and take her to her unit."

"I say!" shouts Karabanov. "It was only atamans that had sand put on their heads. . . ."

"Tell me, oh Cossack!" said Lapot, addressing Semyon. "Does life develop, or does it not?"

"It develops, of course. What about it?"

"Why, formerly only the chief atamans got their heads sprinkled with sand, and now everybody does."

"Aha!" said Karabanov. "Quite right!"

The idea of going to the Zaporozhye Region had come to us after a letter from Dzhurinskaya, in which she communicated to us vague rumours of a plan for a big children's colony to be organized on the island of Hortitsa, adding that she had heard that the People's Commissariat for Education would like the Gorky Colony to be its nucleus.

No detailed working out of this plan had as yet been begun. Dzhurinskaya replied to my inquiries that a final decision could not be expected for some time, everything depending on the plans for the Dnieper project.

We had no clear idea as to what was going on in Kharkov, but a great deal was going on in the colony. It would be hard to say what the colonists dreamed of—the Dnieper, the island, the wide fields, or some factory. Many played with the idea of a steamer of our own. Lapot teased the girls by saying that, according to an old tradition, women were not allowed on the island of Hortitsa, so that something would have to be arranged for the girls on the banks of the Dnieper.

"Never mind," Lapot consoled them. "We'll visit you, and when we want to hang ourselves, we can do it on the island—it'll be much nicer for you."

The *Rabfak* students took part in the jokes and dreams about our inheriting an island on the Dnieper, and gave themselves up willingly to the spirit of play, which they had not yet quite outgrown. The colony laughed till it cried as it looked on, evening after evening, at the broad parodies of life on the Dnieper enacted in the yard—for which purpose most of them made a thorough study of *Taras Bulba*.* The imitative powers of the boys were inexhaustible. Now Karabanov would appear in the yard in trousers made from the stage curtain, and deliver a lecture on the way to make such trousers, which, accord-

* Gogol's novel on the life of the Zaporozhye Cossacks.—*Tr.*

ing to him, required a hundred and twenty arshins of stuff. Now the terrible execution of a Dnieper Cossack, accused by the community of theft, would be enacted. Heroic efforts were made to keep the legendary tradition intact: the execution had to be carried out by rods, while only he who had previously drunk up a tankard of vodka was entitled to wield the rod. For lack of a "tankard of vodka" for the executioner, a huge pot of water was substituted, more than the thirstiest soul alive could have drunk up. Another time the fourth mixed, setting out for work, would bring a mace and a *bunchuk** to Burun. The mace would be made of vegetable marrow, and the *bunchuk* of bast, but Burun had to accept all these honours with respect, and bow to all the points of the compass.

Thus passed the summer. The Dnieper project was still only a project, and the boys had even become tired of playing at it. In August the *Rabfak* students went away, taking with them a new consignment. Five commanders had left our ranks, but none left behind him such a gaping wound as did the commander of the second detachment, my closest friend and one of the original members of the Gorky Colony—Anton Bratchenko, who had after all gone to the *Rabfak*. Osadchy, too, who had cost me so dear, left. He had been the most arrant bandit, and now he was going to the Technological Institute at Kharkov, a slender, handsome youth, tall, strong, reserved, filled with a kind of peculiar virility and force. It was of him that Koval said:

"There's a Komsomol for you—Osadchy! It's sad to have to part with such a Komsomol."

It was quite true. For the last two years Osadchy had borne on his shoulders the complex responsibilities of the commandship of the mill detachment—a task fraught with endless cares and necessitating incessant reckonings with the villagers and the Poor Peasants' Committee.

Georgievsky too—the son of the Irkutsk governor, who had never been able to wash out the blot on his escutcheon, although in the official forms stood the words: "parents unknown"—was leaving us.

* Truncheon with horse's hair attached to it, symbol of Cossack leadership.—*Tr.*

And Schneider, the commander of the glorious eighth detachment, and Marusya Levchenko, commander of the fifth, were both going.

The moment we had seen off the *Rabfak* students we noticed how very juvenile the Gorkyite society had become. In the Commanders' Council itself were boys only recently belonging to the juniors—in the second detachment Vitka Bogoyavlensky; in the third, in the place of Oprishko, Kostya Sharovsky; in the fifth—Natasha Petrenko; in the ninth—Mitka Zhevely; while at last the huge Fedorenko achieved commandership in the eighth detachment. Georgievsky handed over the junior detachment, after three years of uninterrupted leadership, to Toska Solovyov.

Once again we dug for beet and potatoes, spread straw in the stable, sorted and put away grain for the spring sowing; once again the first and second mixed detachments went ploughing, this time without any competition. And only then did we get an official permit from the People's Commissariat for Education in Kharkov to inspect the Popov estate on the Dnieper.

The general meeting of the colonists, on hearing my communication and handing the paper from the People's Commissariat for Education from one to another, felt that this was a serious matter. For we had another paper in our possession in which the People's Commissariat for Education requested the Zaporozhye Regional Executive Committee to place the Popov estate at the disposal of the colony.

At that time we thought these papers represented a final solution of the question; now we had nothing to do but draw a breath of relief and forget our incessant discussions concerning abandoned estates, unsuccessful colonies, moribund monasteries and aristocratic country homes not yet called into new life; now we could forget the legend of the Hortitsa island, pack up our possessions, and go.

The general meeting selected Mitka Zhevely to go with me to inspect and take over the Popov estate. Mitka was now fifteen years old. He had long been a head taller than anyone else in the ranks of the juniors, had mastered the complex art of commander of a mixed detachment, had been a Komsomol for over a year, and had recently

been found worthy of the responsible post of commander of the ninth (the mill detachment). Mitka was a representative of the newest type of Gorkytes—by the age of fifteen he had acquired great practical experience, a resilient carriage, and the ability to organize, while at the same time he had caught many of the ways of the older, fighting generation. From his first day in the colony, Mitka had been a follower of Karabanov, and seemed to have inherited from Karabanov his fiery black eye and fine, energetic gestures. But the great difference between Mitka and Semyon was that Mitka was in the fifth class at the age of fifteen.

Mitka and I set off on a clear, frosty, snowless day at the end of November, and arrived at Zaporozhye in twenty-four hours. In our innocence we had imagined that the new and happy era of the Gorky Colony would begin somewhat as follows: the chairman of the Regional Executive Committee, an individual with a pleasing and revolutionary countenance, would meet us kindly, and be delighted to see us.

"The Popov estate?" we imagined him saying. "For the Gorky Colony? Of course, of course—I know all about it! With pleasure! With pleasure! Here's an order for the estate, just you go and take it!"

And we would only have to ask our way to the estate, rush back to the colony, and tell them to hurry up and pack their belongings as quick as they could.

It never occurred to us that we might not like the Popov estate. Even the austere Bregel of the People's Commissariat for Education had said, when Mitka and I went to see her in Kharkov:

"The Popov estate! Just what Makarenko needs! Popov may have been a bit of a crank, but he did do some building there! You'll see for yourselves. A fine estate, you'll like it!"

Dzhurinskaya said much the same:

"It's lovely there, so rich and beautiful! That place was simply made for a children's colony!"

And Maria Kondratyevna said:

"It's a lovely estate!"

The very fact that everyone knew this estate seemed to be significant, and Mitka and I went there in a mood

of submission to fate—the place had evidently been especially created for us Gorkyites.

But of our many expectations, only one came true—the chairman of the Regional Executive Committee really did have a pleasing revolutionary type of countenance. All the rest turned out quite different, beginning from his very first words to us.

After reading the paper from the People's Commissariat for Education, the chairman said:

“But there's a peasant commune there. And what is this Gorky Colony?”

He stared frankly at Mitka and me, but evidently found Mitka more to his taste, for he asked, smiling at his wary black eyes:

“Will lads like this be at the head of things there?”

Mitka flushed, and started bluffing.

“And what's wrong with our chaps? I don't suppose they'd manage things any worse than your muzhiks!”

With these words, Mitka flushed still redder, while the chairman's smile grew broader.

“Is that what you call our peasants—muzhiks?” he said, and proceeded to admit confidentially: “They do manage things badly, it's true. But there are fifteen hundred hectares there, the matter is beyond the competence of the Regional Executive Committee, you must have it out with the People's Commissariat for Agriculture.”

Mitka screwed up his eyes distrustfully at the chairman.

“Beyond your . . . what d'you call it—competence, you say? What does that mean?”

“You see, I understand your language better than you understand mine! Never mind, your director will explain to you what competence means. Now, what can I do for you? I'll give you a car, and you can go and look round. And you can speak to the commune on the spot, perhaps you'll be able to come to some sort of an agreement. But the matter will be decided in Kharkov, in the People's Commissariat for Agriculture.”

Smiling, the chairman shook hands with Mitka.

“If all your chaps are like that, I'll support you.”

Mitka and I saw the Popov estate, and were intoxicated by its beauty.

At the edge of the famous Great Meadow, on the very place, it seemed to us, where the hut of Taras Bulba had stood, in an angle of the Dnieper and the Kara-Chekrak, a long range of slopes rose abruptly out of the steppe. From their midst rushed the Kara-Chekrak, straight as an arrow, more like a canal than a river, to join the Dnieper, and on its steep bank was—a miracle. Behind high, battlemented walls rose palaces whose peaked roofs and cupolas mingled in fantastic confusion. Some of the towers still retained their weathercocks, but the dark, embrasured windows had a hard, blank stare, contrasting painfully with the graceful intricacy of Moorish, or perhaps it was Arabic, creative fantasy.

By a gate beneath an airy turret with two tiers of windows, we entered a vast courtyard, paved with square tiles, between which the stalks of coarse frostbitten Ukrainian grass had pushed their way with morose insolence, and over which cows, pigs and goats had left obvious traces of their wanderings. We went into the first palace. There was nothing left in it but draughts and malodorous lime, and a plaster Venus of Milo, lacking legs as well as arms, lay on the floor in the hall. The other castles, equally lofty and elegant, also smelled strongly of devastation. Casting over all the eye of an expert, I calculated what the necessary repairs would come to. As a matter of fact, there was nothing to be afraid of—doors and windows were needed, the parquet flooring would have to be mended, stuccoing done everywhere. The Venus of Milo need not be repaired, and stairs, ceilings and stoves were in order.

Mitka was not so prosaic as I was. No amount of devastation could quench his aesthetic enthusiasm. He wandered about the halls, towers and entrances, the yards, big and little, exclaiming in ecstasy:

“Oh my! Just look! It’s fine, upon my word it is! What a place, Anton Semyonovich! Won’t the fellows be pleased! It’s fine, my word it is! How many chaps could live here, d’you think? A thousand?”

According to my calculations eight hundred chaps could be housed.

“And could we manage them? Eight hundred! They’d be mostly from the streets, I suppose. And all our commanders are at the *Rabfak*.”

There was no time to wonder whether we would have been able to manage them or not, and we went on. In the backyard the commune was in charge and had made a sad mess of things. The vast stable was full of dung heaps, and, standing about among the dung heaps, without bedding and neglected, were a few sorry nags, with protruding ribs and soiled rumps, many of them showing bald patches. The enormous hog-house was riddled with holes, there were very few pigs in it, and those but poor specimens. On the frozen mounds of the yard, neglected carts, seed drills, wheels and spare parts were lying about in utter confusion, and over all there seemed to be a layer of savage, stupefying solitude. Only in the hog-house did we meet a single soul—a gnarled old man, with a pointed beard, who said:

“If you’re looking for the office, it’s in that hut over there.”

“Where d’you keep your pigs?” Mitka asked.

“What’s that? Ah . . . pigs!”

The old man shifted his feet, touched his moustache with transparent fingers, and cast a glance towards the stalls. It was clear that Mitka’s question had nonplussed him. But he waved his hand gallantly.

“Oh . . . they’ve eaten them, the scoundrels, eaten them, the bastards. . . .”

“Who?”

“Who? Our own people . . . this here commune. . . .”

“And aren’t you in the commune, Grandpa?”

“Hee-hee, son, I am like a calf among sheep in the commune. The ones who can shout the loudest are the elders now. And they didn’t give an old man any post, they didn’t give him any, the bastards! And who may you be?”

“We’ve come on business.”

“Aha! On business! Oh, well, since you’re here on business, you go in, they’re holding a meeting there . . . a meeting, you see . . . they’re always holding meetings, the sons-of-bitches. . . . And here. . . .”

The old man was now, it appeared, ready to be extremely frank, but we had no time.

In the cramped office, sitting on the rapidly disintegrating chairs of the late landowner, they were holding a meeting, just as the old man had said. It was hard to

make out through the smoke of plug tobacco how many persons were present, but there was enough din for a score or so. Unfortunately we never did discover what was on the agenda, for the moment we entered a curly-haired man, with a black beard, and round, girlishly-sentimental eyes, asked us who we were.

A conversation began which was in turns official and hostile, passionately inimical, and at last, after nearly two hours, simply businesslike. I had been wrong, it appeared. The commune was desperately sick, but by no means ready to give up the ghost, and, recognizing in ourselves uninvited grave diggers, it became highly indignant, and gathering up its failing strength, displayed a remarkable thirst for life.

One thing was clear: fifteen hundred hectares was too much for the commune. One of the causes of its poverty lay in this superfluous wealth. We had no difficulty in coming to an agreement as to the possibility of dividing up the land. The commune was still readier to give up to us the palaces, the battlemented walls and turrets, with the Venus of Milo thrown in. But when it came to the matter of the farmyard, feeling waxed high between the members of the commune and ourselves. Mitka could not even stick to the line of argument, and became personal.

"Why is your beet still lying in the fields?"

And the chairman replied:

"Is a kid like you to question me about my beet?"

We only came to an agreement about the farmyard late in the evening.

"What are we arguing for, like jackasses?" said Mitka.

"The farmyard can be divided by a wall."

We left it at that.

I don't remember what form of transport conveyed us back to the Gorky Colony, but it seems to have been something like wings. Our narrative at the general meeting was received with an unprecedented ovation. Mitka and I were tossed into the air, my spectacles were almost broken, and Mitka had either his nose or his forehead bruised.

A truly happy period began for the colony. The colonists lived on plans for three months. Bregel, who came again to the colony, reproached me.

"What sort of people are you bringing up, Makarenko—dreamers?"

What if they were dreamers? I'm not very fond of the word "dream" myself. It smacks of girlish vapours, and maybe something even worse. But there are dreams and dreams, and it is one thing to dream of a knight on a white steed, and quite another to dream of eight hundred boys and girls in a children's colony. While living in cramped barracks, did we not dream of high, light rooms? Winding rags around our feet, we had dreamed of real footwear. We had dreamed of the *Rabfak*, the Komsomol organization, we had dreamed of the stallion Molodets, and of a herd of Simmenthal cows. When I brought two piglings of English breed in a sack, one such dreamer, tousle-headed Vanya Shelaputin, seated on his own hands, on a high bench, his legs dangling, had glanced up at the ceiling, and said:

"Now we have only two piglings. But soon there'll be a lot more. And those will have still more, and in five years we shall have a hundred hogs. Ho, ho! Ha, ha! D'you hear that, Toska—a hundred hogs!"

And both the dreamer and Toska had broken out into unaccustomed laughter, drowning the business talk going on in my office. And now we had over three hundred hogs, and no one remembered Shelaputin's dreams.

Perhaps the main distinction between our educational system and the bourgeois one lies precisely in the fact that with us a children's collective is bound to develop and prosper, to visualize a better morrow, and to aspire to it in joyful, common efforts, in gay, steadfast visions. Perhaps therein lies the true pedagogical dialectics.

I made no attempt therefore to apply a brake to the dreams of the colonists, but, together with them, soared, and even, perhaps, a little too high. But these were very happy days in the colony, and all my friends still remember them joyfully. Alexei Maximovich himself, whom we wrote to in detail about our affairs, dreamed along with us.

There were only a few people in the colony who were not glad, and who did not dream, and Kalina Ivanovich was one of them. His soul was young, but apparently soul alone is not enough for dreaming. Kalina Ivanovich said of himself:

"Have you seen how a good horse will shy at an automobile? That's because it wants to live, the parasite. While some sorry nag has no fear, not only of an automobile, but of the devil himself, because it doesn't care whether it gets corn or meal, as the Russians say."

I tried to persuade Kalina Ivanovich to go with us, and the boys did, too, but he stood firm.

"I'm not afraid of anything any more, but you don't need a parasite like me. I've gone some of the way with you, and now it's enough. I'll settle down on a pension. The Soviet government is good to us old gaffers."

The Osipovs, too, vowed they would not leave with the colony, adding that they had had enough violent experiences.

"We're humble folk," said Natalya Markovna, "we can't understand what you want with eight hundred people. Really, Anton Semyonovich, you'll get your fingers burnt in this business."

In reply to this declaration, I chanted:

We sing the madness of the brave!

The boys, recognizing the quotation from Gorky, applauded and laughed, but the Osipovs were not so easily put out of countenance.

Silanti, however, consoled me:

"Let them stay behind! You like to harness everyone to racing chariots, as they say, Anton Semyonovich, but a cow won't do for that, and you keep harnessing it. That's how it is."

"But you will, Silanti?"

"Me? What?"

"You'll go in the racing chariot?"

"You can drive me where you like, you can even saddle me, and put me under Budyonny. You see, those swine used me as a beast of burden, as they say. They couldn't see, the swine, that I was a regular charger."

Silanti flung back his head, stamped, and added somewhat tardily:

"That's how it is, you see!"

It was the fact that almost all the teachers, as well as Silanti, Kozyr, Elissov, Godanovich the blacksmith, all the laundresses, cooks, and even mill workers, had decided

to go with us, which made this move seem so specially secure and homely.

But in the meantime things were going badly in Khar-kov. I was often there. The People's Commissariat for Education supported us to a man. Even Bregel was drawn into our dreams, although at the time she persisted in calling me Don Quixote of the Zaporozhye.

And at last even the People's Commissariat for Agriculture, though they pursed their lips, and pretended scornfully to forget our name, calling us now the Gorky, now the Korolenko, and now the Shevchenko Colony, gave in, with a: "take eight hundred desyatins and the Popov estate, if you like,—only leave us in peace."

It soon appeared, however, that our foes were not in the fighting line, but lying in ambush. And I had gone for them baldheaded, fancying that this was the final, victorious blow, after which we could sound our bugles in triumph. But when a little fellow in a short jacket came out from behind the bushes to meet my attack, and uttered a few words, I was crushed, and retreated, throwing down my weapons, abandoning my banners, and hurling back the victoriously advancing ranks of the colonists.

"The People's Commissariat for Finance cannot sanction such a gamble by assigning you thirty thousand rubles for repairing a palace which nobody wants. Why, your own children's homes are in ruins!"

"But it isn't just for repairs. These estimates include inventory and the expenses of moving."

"We know all about that! Eight hundred desyatins, eight hundred waifs, eight hundred cows. The time for such gambles has passed. We've forked out millions to the People's Commissariat for Education, and nothing ever came of it. They stole everything, broke up everything, and then ran away."

And the little man trampled on our beautiful living dream, so unexpectedly dashed to the ground. Neither tears, nor assurances that it had been Gorky's dream, too, were of any avail. The dream died.

And on the way home I remembered, shuddering, that our scholastic course included the theme: "Our farm in the Zaporozhye Region." Sherre had twice visited the

Popov estate. He had drawn up an agricultural plan which he communicated to the colonists—a plan studded with diamonds, emeralds and rubies, in which fleets of tractors, herds of cows, flocks of sheep, poultry to the tune of hundreds of thousands, the export of butter and eggs to England, incubators, separators, and orchards, gleamed, sparkled, and shed dazzling rays.

Only a week before I had been met on the way from Kharkov by the excited juniors, who had dragged me out of the carriage with shouts of:

“Anton Semyonovich! Anton Semyonovich! Dawn has foaled. Come and see! Come and see! Come *now*!”

They had borne me off to the stables and stood around the still moist, trembling, golden foal. They had smiled in silence, a single voice murmuring with feeling:

“We’ve called it Zaporozhets.”

My dear little chaps! Not yours to follow the plough over the Great Meadow, to live in the fairy palace, to blow your bugles from the height of the Moorish towers! All for nothing have you christened the little golden steed Zaporozhets!

17

A LESSON IN RECKONING

The blow dealt by the man from the People’s Commissariat for Finance was a crushing one. The hearts of the colonists ached, our foes sneered and guffawed, and I myself was seriously perturbed. But none of us considered any more the idea of staying on the Kolomak. Even the People’s Commissariat for Education meekly realized our stubborn determination, and considered the matter from one point of view only—where were we to go?

Everything was very complicated during the February and March of 1926. The Zaporozhye fiasco had extinguished the last sparks of triumphant optimism, but the collective still clung stubbornly to some remnants of hope. Not a week passed without some proposal or other being discussed at the general meeting of the colonists. There were still many places in the spacious Ukraine steppe, where either no one was farming the land, or the farming was being badly done. They were suggested to us one after the other by our friends in the People’s Commissariat for

Education, Komsomol organizations, by the oldest inhabitants in the neighbourhood, and by distant acquaintances in the agricultural line. During this period Sherre, the boys, and I traversed many roads and highroads in trains, in automobiles, or in carriages drawn by Molodets, and all sorts of local hacks and nags.

But the scouts returned home with little more than fatigue; at the general meetings the colonists heard them out with cold, businesslike faces, and dispersed, everyone going to his task, having fired at the speaker the first hard question that came into their heads:

"How many could be housed there? A hundred and twenty? That's no good!"

"What town, did you say? Piryatin? Nuts!"

And the speakers themselves were glad of such an outcome, for in their hearts they were more afraid of the meeting being tempted into acceptance than of anything else.

In this manner the Staritsky estate in Valky, the monastery at Piryatin, the Lubny monastery, the mansions of the Kochubei princes in Dikanka, and other utterly worthless places, passed before our eyes in rapid succession.

A still greater number of places were mentioned and brushed aside immediately as unworthy of investigation. One of these was Kuryazh, a children's colony close to Kharkov, with four hundred children, who were said to be utterly demoralized. The idea of a demoralized children's institution filled us with such horror that the thought of Kuryazh produced nothing but a few tiny, fragile bubbles, which burst almost as soon as they were formed.

Once, during one of my routine journeys to Kharkov, I came upon a meeting of the Children's Aid Committee. The situation of the Kuryazh colony, which was under the Committee's authority, was being discussed. Yuryev, an inspector from the Department of Public Education, was reporting with restrained bitterness on the situation in the colony, the very terseness and restraint of his language exposing the crazy and terrifying state of affairs. To the listeners, the Kuryazh colony with its forty pedagogues and four hundred charges seemed to be a con-

glomeration of doubtful anecdotes, concocted by a foul-minded pervert, a misanthrope and a cynic.

I wanted to bang my fist on the table, and shout:

"It can't be! It's sheer gossip!"

But Yuryev appeared to be quite a reliable person, and beneath the studied gravity of the speaker could be discerned the deep-seated melancholy of the pedagogue, a thing I could very well understand. My presence embarrassed Yuryev, who kept glancing at me as if he felt there was something wrong in his attire. After the meeting he came up to me and said frankly:

"Upon my word, I was ashamed to talk about all this beastliness in front of you. At your place, they say, if a colonist is five minutes late for dinner you place him under arrest on bread and water for a whole day, and he smiles and says 'very good!'"

"It's not quite like that. If I were to employ such a successful method you'd find yourself reporting on the Gorky Colony much in the style of your today's report."

Yuryev and I talked and argued. He invited me to dine with him, and said to me over the dinner table:

"D'you know what? Why shouldn't you take on Kuryazh?"

"What for? Besides it's full as it is."

"Full, is it? We could release a hundred and twenty places for you."

"I don't like the idea. Dirty work! And you wouldn't let me work."

"We would! Why are you so afraid of us? We'll give you *carte blanche*. Do what you like. Kuryazh is in a ghastly state. Think how awful to have such a nest of brigands just next to the capital! You heard me. Robbing people on the highway. Eighteen thousand rubles' worth of property stolen in the colony itself in four months!"

"So the whole staff would have to be sacked!"

"Oh, no—there are some splendid people there."

"In such cases I usually recommend complete disinfection."

"All right—sack them, sack them!"

"No, no! We're not going to Kuryazh."

"But you haven't even seen it, have you?"

"No, I haven't."

"I'll tell you what! Stay till tomorrow, and we'll take Khalabuda and go and have a look at it."

I agreed. The next day we all three drove over to Kuryazh. I went there without the slightest suspicion that I was going to choose a tomb for my colony.

Sidor Karpovich Khalabuda, the chairman of the Children's Aid Committee, accompanied us. He ruled conscientiously over his department, which at that time consisted of miserable, half-ruined children's homes and colonies, food shops, cinemas, wicker furniture stores, pleasure gardens, lotteries and accountant's offices. Sidor Karpovich was swarming with vermin—merchants, agents, croupiers, charlatans, rogues, swindlers and embezzlers, and I longed with all my heart to present him with a big bottle of insecticide. He had long been deafened by all sorts of considerations, suggested to him from all sides—economic, pedagogical, psychological and others, and had lost all hope of understanding why there was poverty, wholesale flight, thieving and hooliganism in his colonies. Now he bowed to reality, profoundly convinced that the homeless child represented an accumulation of all seven deadly sins, and all that remained of his former optimism was his faith in a better future, and in the virtues of rye.

This last characteristic of his I discovered later on, but now, sitting in the automobile, I listened to his utterances without the slightest suspicion.

"People must have rye. So long as people have rye, there's nothing to be afraid of. What's the good, after all, of teaching a boy to read Gogol, if he has no bread to eat? Give him rye, and *then* put a book into his hands. Those bandits, they can steal, but they can't sow rye."

"A bad lot?"

"Who? They? You ought to see them! Always coming to me: 'Sidor Karpovich, do give me five rubles—I'm longing for a smoke!' I give it him, of course, and a week later, back he comes: 'Sidor Karpovich, give me five rubles.' 'I gave you five rubles,' I say. 'That was for cigarettes,' he says. 'Now give me some for vodka.'"

After flying over the monotonous, sandy road for six kilometres, we ascended a low hill, and drove through the crumbling gates of the monastery. In the middle of the

circular courtyard rose the shapeless mass of an ancient, but nonetheless hideous church, behind it a three-storey building of some sort, and around it long, low annexes, held up by rotting porches. A little to the side, on the edge of a steep bluff, was a two-storey, wooden inn, in an unfinished state. In various holes and corners nestled small houses, sheds, kitchens, and all sorts of rubbishy erections, the accumulations of three hundred years, put together from nondescript materials. The first thing which struck me was the stench prevailing in the colony. It was a complex blend of privies, cabbage soup, dung, and . . . incense. From the church came the sound of singing, and on its steps sat a few disagreeable, shrivelled old women, brooding, no doubt, over the happy days when there had been someone to beg alms from. But there were no colonists in sight.

The dingy, shabby director looked wistfully at our Fiat car, patted the mudguard, and led us over the colony. It was obvious that he was used not so much to showing it off as to exposing it to criticism, and his Way of Sorrows was well marked out for him.

"This is the dormitory of the first collective," he said, passing a place where once there had been a door, but where now there was a mere gap—even the jambs had gone. We crossed a second threshold with equal ease, and turned into a passage on the left, which was just as cold, despite the stuffiness, as it was out of doors. Proof of this was to be found in the snowdrifts along the walls, which had had ample leisure to be covered with dust.

"Aren't there any doors?" I asked.

The manager did his best to show that he had not quite forgotten how to smile, and went on. Yuryev said loudly:

"The doors have been burned long ago. That's nothing! They're tearing up the floors, now, and burning them, they've burned the cellar doors, and even some of the carts."

"Haven't they any wood?"

"God knows why they haven't any wood! They were given money for wood."

"Very likely they have got wood," said Khalabuda, blowing his nose. "They just don't want to saw and chop,

and they haven't got the money to hire anyone. They have wood, the swine! You know these colony kids—they're bandits, that's what they are!"

At last we arrived at a real, closed door, belonging to a dormitory. Khalabuda kicked at it, when it immediately swung open on the lower hinge, threatening to topple on to our heads. Khalabuda supported it with his hand, laughing.

"No, you don't, you old devil!" he said. "I know your little ways!"

We went into the dormitory. On dirty, broken bedsteads, on heaps of formless rags, sat waifs, real waifs, in all their glory, huddling under similar rags for warmth. By a dilapidated stove two boys were chopping up a board, evidently recently painted yellow. Filth lay about in the corners, and even in the spaces between the beds. Here were the same smells as those which prevailed in the yard, minus the incense.

We were followed by eyes, but no heads were turned. I noticed that all the waifs were over sixteen.

"Are these the seniors?" I asked.

"Yes. This is Collective Number One—the seniors," explained the manager obligingly.

From a distant corner came an exclamation in a deep voice.

"Don't you believe what they say! They're all liars!"

From another corner someone said in free accents, without the slightest emphasis:

"Show you! What's there to show here? Why don't they show you all they've stolen?"

We paid not the slightest attention to these utterances, Yuryev merely blushing and glancing furtively towards me.

We went out into the passage.

"There are six dormitories in this building," said the manager. "Shall I show you them?"

"Show me the workshops," I said.

Khalabuda came to life, and embarked upon a long narrative of the successful purchase of some lathes.

Once again we went out into the yard. A little fellow, holding his jacket tight over his chest, was jumping in our direction from mound to mound in his endeavours not

to step on the strips of snow with his bare, blackened feet. I stopped him, falling back from the others.

"Where do you come from, little chap?"

He stopped and raised his face.

"I've been to find out if they're going to send us away."

"Where?"

"They say we're to be sent somewhere."

"Don't you like it here?"

"We can't go on living here," said the little fellow softly and sadly, rubbing his ear with a corner of his jacket. "We should freeze to death. Besides, they beat us."

"Who beats you?"

"Everyone."

He was a bright little chap, and apparently lacked experience of the streets. He had big blue eyes, not yet made hideous by grimaces learned in the streets. If he had been washed he would have been a nice little boy.

"What do they beat you for?"

"Anything. If you don't give them something they want. Or they take our dinner from us. Our chaps, they have been going without dinner for a long time. Sometimes they even take the bread.... Or if you don't steal when they tell you to steal something.... Do you know whether we are to be sent away?"

"I don't know, son."

"They say it will be summer soon...."

"What d'you want the summer for?"

"I shall go away then...."

They were calling me to the workshops. It seemed to me impossible to leave the little fellow without giving him some sort of help, but he was hopping along by the mounds, making for the dormitories—apparently it was a little warmer there than out of doors.

We weren't able to look over the workshops after all—some mysterious being was supposed to have the keys, and search as he would the manager was unable to pierce the mystery. We contented ourselves with peeping through the windows. We could make out punching machines, joiners' benches and two turning lathes, twelve pieces of equipment in all. The cobblers' and tailors' shops, the

traditional stand-by of pedagogics, were housed in separate buildings.

"Is today a holiday here?" I asked.

The director did not reply. Yuryev once again took upon himself the hard task of interpretation.

"I'm surprised at you, Anton Semyonovich! You ought to understand everything by now. Nobody does any work here, that's the situation. Besides, the tools have been stolen, and there's no material, no energy, no orders, no nothing! And then, none of them knows how to work."

The colony's power plant, of which Khalabuda had boasted so proudly, was not working either—something had broken down.

"Well, and the school?"

The director answered this question himself.

"There is a school," he said. "But we have other things to think about."

Khalabuda kept urging us into the fields. When we stepped out of the circle enclosed by walls several feet thick, our eyes were greeted by a depression in the ground, which must once have been a pond. On the other side fields stretched out to the forest, covered by a thin layer of patchy snow. Khalabuda extended his arm in a Napoleonic gesture, exclaiming triumphantly:

"A hundred and twenty desyatins. Wealth!"

"Have the winter crops been sown?" I asked incautiously.

"Winter crops?" cried Khalabuda delightedly. "Thirty desyatins of rye, say, a hundred poods a desyatin, three thousand poods of rye alone! They won't be left without bread. And what rye! If only people would sow rye, they wouldn't need anything else. What's wheat? *Rye* bread—the Germans can't eat it, you know, even the French can't—but our folk, so long as there's rye bread...."

We had got back to the car by now, and Khalabuda was still holding forth about rye. At first this irritated us, but after a bit it became interesting—what more would he find to say about rye?

We got into the car and drove away, the lonely, melancholy manager seeing us off. Silence was maintained as far as the Kholodnaya hill. As we were crossing the

market place Yuryev nodded towards a group of street boys, saying:

"Those are boys from Kuryazh. Well—will you take it on?"

"No, I won't."

"What are you afraid of? The Gorky Colony is a home for delinquents, too, isn't it? The All-Ukrainian Commission sends you all sorts of riffraff, anyhow. And we'd give you normal children here."

Even Khalabuda had to laugh, seated in the car.

"Normal—I like that!"

Yuryev pursued his line of thought.

"Let's go right away to Dzhurinskaya, and have a talk. The Children's Aid Committee would hand the colony over to the People's Commissariat for Education. Khar'kov doesn't like sending you delinquents, and they haven't any colony of their own. And this would be our own, and what a colony! Four hundred children. That's something like! The workshops here aren't bad. . . . Sidor Karpovich, would you give the colony away?"

Khalabuda thought for a moment.

"Thirty desyatins of rye," he said. "That's two hundred and forty poods of grain. And the work? Would you pay? Why shouldn't we give up the colony? We'll give it up!"

"Let's go to Dzhurinskaya," urged Yuryev. "We'll transfer a hundred and twenty of the younger children somewhere else, and leave you two hundred and eighty. They may not be delinquents officially, but after their education in Kuryazh they're something worse than delinquents."

"Why should I go into this hole?" I asked Yuryev. "Besides, the place needs cleaning up. It would cost not less than twenty thousand rubles."

"Sidor Karpovich would give you that."

Khalabuda seemed to wake up.

"Twenty thousand rubles? What for?"

"Repairs, doors, tools, bedding, clothing, everything."

Khalabuda pouted.

"Twenty thousand!" he exclaimed. "We could do everything ourselves for twenty thousand."

At Dzhurinskaya's, Yuryev continued his propaganda. Lyubov Savelyevna listened to him with a smile on her face, glancing at me now and then with curiosity.

"That would be too costly an experiment," she said. "We can't expose the Gorky Colony to such a risk. We must simply close Kuryazh, and distribute the children among other colonies. Besides, Comrade Makarenko wouldn't go to Kuryazh."

"No, I wouldn't," I said.

"Is that final?" asked Yuryev.

"I'll have a talk with my colonists, but I'm sure they'll refuse."

Khalabuda blinked.

"Who'll refuse?"

"The colonists."

"D'you mean—your charges?"

"Why, yes!"

"What do they know about it?"

Dzhurinskaya put her hand on Khalabuda's sleeve.

"Sidor, old dear," she said. "They know more about it than you and I do. I'd like to see their faces when they behold your Kuryazh!"

Khalabuda lost his temper.

"Why do you keep on at me about 'my Kuryazh'? Why is it mine? I gave you fifty thousand rubles. And an engine. And twelve lathes. And the teachers are yours. How can I help it if they don't know their own business?"

I left these social education workers to settle their domestic troubles and hurried to catch the train. Karabanov and Zadorov came to the station to see me off. Hearing my report of Kuryazh, they fixed their gaze on the wheels of the railway carriage, and gave themselves up to meditation. At last Karabanov said:

"It's not a very great honour for the Gorkyites to clean out privies, but who knows? It needs thinking over."

"But we should be near—we'd help," said Zadorov, showing his teeth. "D'you know what, Semyon, we'll go and have a look at it tomorrow!"

The general meeting of the colonists, like all our meetings of late, gave me a guarded and thoughtful hearing. While making my report, I listened curiously, not only to

the meeting, but to my own heart. Suddenly I felt like smiling sadly. What had happened? Had I been a child, four months before, when, together with the colonists, I had bubbled over in ecstasy about the castles in the Zaporozhye we had built? Had I grown up, or had I merely become spiritless? I felt that there must be a distressing lack of confidence in my words, in the tone of my voice, in the expression of my face. For a whole year we had been straining towards wide, light-filled spaces; surely our aspirations were not to be crowned by an absurd, befouled place like Kuryazh! How had it come about that I should be discussing such an intolerable future with the colonists of my own free will? What was there to attract us in Kuryazh? For what advantages were we to abandon our flower beds, our Kolomak, our parquet floors, the estate we ourselves had restored to life?

And yet there was a poem, terse and full of rectitude, in which there was no room for a single joyous word, but in which, to my own astonishment, I could detect an austere, lofty challenge, and—somewhere far away—a timid joy seemed to be lurking.

The colonists now and again interrupted my narrative with laughter, in those very places where I had expected to move them to dismay. Stifling their laughter, they bombarded me with questions, and on receiving my replies laughed still louder. And it was not the laughter of hope or joy—it was derision.

“And what do the forty teachers do?”

“I couldn’t say.”

Laughter.

“Anton Semyonovich! Didn’t you sock anyone in the jaw there? I couldn’t have helped it, I’m sure!”

Laughter.

“Is there a dining room there?”

“There is, but the children are all barefoot, so the soup kettles are carried into the dormitories, and they eat there.”

Laughter.

“Who carries them in?”

“I didn’t see. The boys themselves, probably.”

“In turns—or how?”

“In turns, I suppose.”

"Ah! So they *do* organize!"

Laughter.

"Is there a Komsomol organization?"

Here the laughter peals out, without waiting for my reply. And yet, when I finished my report, all looked at me with grave anxiety.

"And what's your opinion?" cried somebody.

"I'll decide as you do."

Lapot looked closely at me, and apparently could make nothing of my expression.

"Come on, now—speak out! Well? Why don't you say anything? I'd like to know where your silence will lead you to?"

Denis Kudlaty raised his hand.

"Aha! Denis! I wonder what *you* have to say!"

Denis started to scratch the back of his head, but remembering that this weakness of his was always made fun of by the colonists, he let his unwanted hand fall.

But the boys, who had noticed his manoeuvre, laughed.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I've nothing special to say. Of course, it's nearer Kharkov, that's true. But to undertake a thing like that—who have we got? Everyone's gone to the *Rabfak*."

He shook his head as if he had swallowed a fly.

"As a matter of fact, it's hardly worth talking about that Kuryazh. Why should we butt in there? And then, remember—there are two hundred and eighty of them, and a hundred and twenty of us, and such a lot of ours are new, and who are the seniors? Toska's a commander now, and Natasha's a commander, and Perepelyatchenko, and Sukhoivan, and Galatenko. . . ."

"What's this about Galatenko?" said a sleepy, disgruntled voice. "Whenever anything's wrong, it's 'Galatenko.'"

"You shut up!" said Lapot.

"Why should I shut up? Anton Semyonovich has told us what the people there are like. And me—don't I work?"

"Very well, then," continued Denis. "I apologize—but we will have our mugs beaten in, you'll see."

Mitka Zhevely raised his head.

"Gently with your 'mugs'!"

"What'll you do about it?"

"Never mind what we mean to do!"

Kudlaty resumed his seat. Ivan Ivanovich took the floor.

"Comrade Colonists, I don't mean to go anywhere, so I may be said to see things from the outside, and see them clearer. Why should you go to Kuryazh? They'll leave us three hundred of the worst boys, and Kharkov boys at that."

"And don't they send Kharkov boys here?" asked Lapot.

"They do. But just think—three hundred! And Anton Semyonovich says the children are quite grown-up. And another thing—you'll be going to them, while they'll be at home. If they have stolen clothes alone to the value of eighteen thousand rubles, just think what they'll do with you!"

"Roast us!" shouted someone.

"They won't bother to roast us—they'll eat us raw!"

"And they'll teach a lot of our boys to steal," continued Ivan Ivanovich. "Have we got any of that sort?"

"Any amount," replied Kudlaty. "We have forty young feller-me-lads who only don't steal because they're afraid."

"You see!" said Ivan Ivanovich, delighted. "Now count! There'll be eighty of you, counting the girls and the little ones, and three hundred and twenty of them. And what is it all for? Why wreck the Gorky Colony? You're going to your ruin, Anton Semyonovich!"

Ivan Ivanovich sat down, glancing around triumphantly. The colonists murmured as if in qualified approval, but there was not much decision in the sound.

Kalina Ivanovich, in his ancient greatcoat, but shaved and well-groomed as ever, took the floor amidst general approval. Kalina Ivanovich was suffering at the thought of having to part with the colony, and I could see a great and human melancholy in his blue eyes, which shone with the uncertain light of age.

"It's like this," began Kalina Ivanovich unhurriedly. "I'm not going with you, either, so I suppose I'm an outsider, too, only I don't feel like one. Where you go, and where life takes you, are two different things. Last month you said: we'll have enough butter to send to the English. Now do tell me, an old man, how can such a thing be allowed? I saw how excited you all were—let's go, let's

go! Well, what if you had gone? Of course, theoretically, it would have been the Zaporozhye, but in practice you would simply have raised cows, that's all. How much sweat would you have poured out before your butter got to the English—did you ever think of that? It would be grazing, and carting dung, and washing cow's backsides, if your butter's to be any good. You never thought of all that, you sillies! It was all: let's go! let's go! And it's a good thing you never did go. And now there's Kuryazh, and you sit and think. But what is there to think about? You're a progressive individual, and just look—three hundred of your brothers are going to the dogs, the same Maxim Gorkys as you are yourselves. Anton Semyonovich told you about them, and you guffawed, but what's so funny in it? How is the Soviet government to reconcile itself to four hundred bandits growing up in the very capital, in Kharkov, right under the nose of the head of the Ukrainian government? And now the Soviet government says to you—go ahead and work, help them to become decent people—three hundred people, just think! And you'll be watched not by some riffraff, some Luka Semyonovich, but by the whole Kharkov proletariat! And you refuse! You can't bear to leave your rosebushes, and you're afraid—there are so few of us, and so many of them, the parasites. And how do you think Anton Semyonovich and I, just the two of us, started this colony? Did we call a general meeting and make speeches? Let Volokhov and Taranets and Gud tell you if we were afraid of them, the parasites! And this would be work for the State, work the Soviet government needs. And I tell you—go, and that's all about it! And Maxim Gorky would say—look at my Gorkytes, they went, the parasites! They weren't frightened off!”

The longer Kalina Ivanovich spoke, the redder grew his cheeks, and the more the eyes of the colonists glowed. Many of those seated on the floor moved nearer to us, and some placed their chins on the shoulders of their neighbours, and looked fixedly, not into the face of Kalina Ivanovich, but somewhere far away, towards some future exploit. And when Kalina Ivanovich mentioned Maxim Gorky, the fervent eyes of the colonists seemed about to be bursting into flame, the lads shouted, yelled,

milled about, broke out into cheers. But there was no time for cheering. Mitka Zhevely stood amidst those seated on the floor, and shouted to the back rows, apparently expecting to meet resistance from there.

"We'll go, fellow parasites—that we will!"

But the back rows, too, shot all sorts of flames towards Mitka, with the most resolute expressions on their faces, and then Mitka turned to Kalina Ivanovich, surrounded by a seething mass of the boys who were capable at this moment of nothing but squealing.

"Kalina Ivanovich, since that's how it is, won't you come with us, too?"

Kalina Ivanovich smiled ruefully, filling his pipe.

Lapot made a speech.

"What's written up there—read!"

All shouted in unison:

"No whining!"

"Come on, then—read it again!"

Lapot thrust his clenched fist downward, and all repeated, sternly, resoundingly:

"No whining!"

"And you whine! A fine set of mathematicians! They count eighty and three hundred and twenty. That's not the way to count! When we took in forty Kharkov kids, did we count? Where are they?"

"We're here, we're here!" shouted the little chaps.

"Well then!"

The little chaps shouted:

"Fine!"

"What the hell's the counting for, then? If I were Ivan Ivanovich I'd count this way—we have no lice, and they have ten thousand—so stay where you are!"

The hilarious meeting glanced at Ivan Ivanovich, who was red with shame.

"It amounts to this," said Lapot. "We have the Gorky Colony on our side, and who have they? Nobody!"

Lapot had finished. The colonists shouted:

"Right! We'll go, and that's that! Let Anton Semyonovich write to the People's Commissariat for Education!"

"Right you are!" said Kudlaty. "We'll go, then! But to do so, we must use our brains. Tomorrow's the first of March, there's not a moment to be lost. We mustn't

write, we must telegraph. Otherwise we shan't have any truck garden. And another thing—we can't go without money, either. Twenty thousand, or whatever it may be, but money there must be."

"Shall we put it to the vote?" asked Lapot, seeking my advice.

"Let Anton Semyonovich tell us what he thinks," came shouts from the crowd.

"Can't you see?" said Lapot. "Still, for the sake of order we must do it. Anton Semyonovich takes the floor."

I rose before the meeting, and said briefly:

"Three cheers for the Gorky Colony!"

Half an hour later Mitka Bogoyavlensky, recently promoted senior groom and commander of the second detachment, set off on horseback for the town.

He took with him a telegram:

"Kharkov Commissariat for Education Dzhurinskaya
Earnestly request you give us Kuryazh soon as possible
to be in time for sowing shall forward estimate.
General meeting of colonists.

"Makarenko."

18

RECONNAISSANCE

Dzhurinskaya summoned me by telegraph the very next day. The colonists in their simplicity attributed enormous significance to the telegram.

"You see how it works: rat-tat-tat—one telegram after another...."

As it turned out, things developed without any such expedition. Although it was universally admitted that Kuryazh could no longer be tolerated, if only on account of the earnest entreaties issuing from suburban homes, villages and hamlets for the liquidation of this "den of thieves," there were still some who stuck up for it. As a matter of fact nobody but Dzhurinskaya and Yuryev wanted the unconditional transfer of our colony to Kuryazh, and only Yuryev was really convinced of the expediency of the suggested operation; Dzhurinskaya agreed to it simply because of her faith in me.

"All the same, I feel very nervous, Anton Semyonovich," she said. "I can't help it—I do!"

Bregel was in favour of the transfer, but suggested conditions to which I could not possibly agree: she wanted a special committee of three to undertake the whole operation, the Gorky traditions to be gradually inculcated in the new collective, and fifty Komsomol members from Kharkov to be sent there for a month to help me.

Khalabuda, under the promptings of some of the scoundrelly personages by whom he was always surrounded, would not hear of a twenty-thousand-ruble grant and could only repeat:

"With twenty thousand we could manage it ourselves."

Unexpected enemies attacked us from the trade union. Especially virulent was a certain Klyamer, a passionate dark-haired man, who called himself a "friend of the people". I still don't know why the Gorky Colony irritated him so, but whenever he referred to it his face would be distorted with rage, and he would spit and bang his fist on the table:

"Everywhere reformers! Who is Makarenko? Why must we break the laws and violate the interests of the working class for the sake of some Makarenko or other? And what do we know about the Gorky Colony? Who has seen it? Dzhurinskaya has—well, what of it? Does Dzhurinskaya understand everything?"

These were the demands of mine which irritated Klyamer so much:

1. The discharge of the entire staff of Kuryazh without any discussion whatsoever.
2. The number of teachers in the Gorky Colony to be fifteen (forty was considered the norm).
3. Teachers to be paid not forty, but eighty rubles a month.
4. The staff to be selected by myself, the trade union retaining its right of objection.

These modest requests made Klyamer almost weep with vexation.

"I'd like to see anyone daring to discuss this insolent ultimatum! Every word is a sneer at Soviet law. He needs fifteen teachers, so twenty five are to be thrown overboard.

He wants to make his teachers work like galley slaves, and forty will be in his way."

I did not enter into a controversy with Klyamer, not quite understanding what he was driving at.

Altogether I tried to keep out of discussions and arguments, for in my heart I was not certain of success, and did not wish to force anyone to take a risk which he thought unjustified. In truth I had only one argument—the Gorky Colony, but not many people had seen it, and it was not for me to tell them about it.

So many individuals, passions, and personal relations had become involved in the question of the transfer of the colony, that I was very soon out of my depth, and the fact that I was never in Kharkov for more than a day at a time, and never managed to attend any meetings, made things still more difficult for me. Somehow I did not believe in the sincerity of my opponents, and could not help suspecting that very different motives underlay their ostensible arguments.

I met with real, impassioned, human conviction in only one person in the People's Commissariat for Education, and I regarded it with frank admiration. The person was a woman, judging by her attire, but seemed to be a sexless being—short of stature, with an equine countenance, a flat, puny chest and huge, clumsy legs. She was always waving her red hands about, either gesticulating, or setting to rights her coarse, straight, tow-coloured locks. Everyone called her Comrade Zoya, and she was not without a certain influence in Bregel's office.

Comrade Zoya detested me on sight, and made no secret of it, nor did she hesitate to use the most violent expressions.

"You're not a pedagogue, Makarenko, you're a martinet! I'm told you're an ex-colonel, and it looks as if it were true. I simply can't understand why people make such a fuss of you here! I wouldn't let you go near children."

I liked the crystalline sincerity and lucid passion of Comrade Zoya, and I also made no secret of my feelings in my answers to her.

"I admire you more and more, Comrade Zoya, only I never was a colonel, you know."

Comrade Zoya, who was convinced that the transfer of the colony would end in catastrophe, banged her fist on Bregel's desk, fairly howling:

"You seem to be infatuated! What spell has been cast on you all by this—" she glanced towards me.

"Colonel," I said gravely, as if prompting her.

"Yes, colonel! I'll tell you what all this will end in—in a massacre. He'll take his hundred and twenty over there, and there'll be a massacre. What have you to say to that, Comrade Makarenko?"

"Your reasoning entrances me, but I should like to know who's going to massacre whom."

Bregel tried to quell our altercations.

"Zoya! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Why should there be any massacre? And you, Anton Semyonovich, you make fun of everything."

Word of our wranglings and controversies had begun to reach the highest party circles, and I was glad of that. I was even glad to hear that Kuryazh was beginning to decompose, with a fearful stench, calling for urgent and drastic measures. Kuryazh itself clamoured for a decision, though its own teachers protested that all this talk of our colony being transferred to them was completely demoralizing the Kuryazh colonists.

These same teachers went about telling people in strict confidence that the Kuryazhites were sharpening their blades in preparation for the arrival of the Gorkyites. Comrade Zoya spluttered into my face:

"You see, you see!"

"I do," I replied. "So now we know—it's they who are to cut our throats, and not we who are to cut theirs."

"Yes, now we know.... Look out, Varvara! You will be held answerable for everything! Did you ever hear of such a thing? Inciting one group of waifs against another!"

At last I was summoned to the office of a superior organization.

A clean-shaven man raised his head from his papers, and said:

"Sit down, Comrade Makarenko."

Dzhurinskaya and Klyamer were also there.

I sat down.

"Are you certain that you and your charges will be able to stop the rot in Kuryazh?" the clean-shaven man asked me quietly.

Surely I must have turned pale from the strain of looking straight into my interlocutor's eyes, and answering a question put in perfect good faith with a downright lie:

"Yes, I am."

The clean-shaven man gave me a steady glance, and went on:

"Now I have a purely technical question to ask you—a technical question, Comrade Klyamer, mind you, and not a question of principle—tell me, as briefly as you are able, why you want only fifteen teachers, and not forty, and what you have against a salary of forty rubles for them?"

After a moment's thought I replied:

"Well then, to put it as briefly as I can—forty-ruble teachers are capable of causing the demoralization not only of a collective of homeless children, but of any collective in the world."

The clean-shaven man threw himself back in his chair, in a paroxysm of laughter, and then said, in a choking voice, pointing at Klyamer:

"Even a collective consisting of Klyamers?"

"Oh, definitely," I said gravely.

His official reserve seemed to have been blown away as by a gust of wind. He extended his arm towards Lyubov Savelyevna.

"That's just what I told you—the more there are, the less they're worth!"

Suddenly he nodded his head wearily, and returning to his brusque official manner, said to Dzhurinskaya:

"Let him take it over! And quick about it!"

"Twenty thousand," I said, getting up.

"You'll get it. Isn't it too much?"

"Not enough!"

"All right. Good-bye! You go there, but remember—the thing has got to be a complete success."

In the Gorky Colony the first stage of ardent determination had by now gradually passed into one of unhurried preparation, conducted with an almost military precision. Lapot was the real ruler of the colony, with Koval to

help him at critical moments, but the task of ruling the colony was not a hard one. Never before had there been such an atmosphere of friendly solidarity, such a profound sense of collective responsibility. The slightest transgression was met with unmitigated astonishment, and a curt, expressive adjuration:

“And *you* mean to go to Kuryazh!”

No one in the colony could harbour any more doubts as to the true nature of the problem. The colonists did not so much know as feel the necessity of subordinating everything to the requirements of the collective, and that without any sense of sacrifice.

It was a joy, perhaps the deepest joy the world has to give—this feeling of interdependence, of the strength and flexibility of human relations, of the calm, vast power of the collective, vibrating in an atmosphere permeated with its own force. All this could be read in the colonists' eyes, in their movements, their expressions, their gait, their work. All eyes were turned to the north, where an ignorant horde, united by poverty, anarchy, and dull obstinacy, was waiting for us with fierce snarls behind thick walls.

I noticed that there was not the slightest boastfulness in the attitude of the colonists. Somewhere, deep down, everyone harboured a secret fear and uncertainty, heightened by the fact that the enemy had as yet been seen by no one.

My return from town was always awaited eagerly and impatiently, colonists were picketed on the roads, on trees, a lookout was kept from the roofs. As soon as I drove into the yard, a trumpeter would sound the signal for a general meeting without asking my permission. I would go meekly to the meeting. At that time it had become a custom to greet me with applause, as if I were a People's Actor. This applause was of course meant not so much for me, as for our common cause.

At last, in the beginning of May, I came to one such meeting with a signed agreement in my hand.

Under this agreement, and by special order of the People's Commissariat for Education, the Maxim Gorky Colony was to be transferred with all its members, staff, movables, livestock and inventory to Kuryazh. The Ku-

ryazh Colony was declared to be closed, its two hundred and eighty colonists and all its property were put at the disposal and under the management of the Gorky Colony. The entire staff of the Kuryazh Colony, with the exception of a few employees, was declared to be discharged from the moment the director of the Gorky Colony took over the management of Kuryazh.

I was requested to take over on the fifth of May, and to have completed the move by the fifteenth of May.

After I had read them the agreement and the order, the Gorkyites did not shout "hurrah!" and did not toss anyone up. In the midst of a general silence Lapot said:

"Let's write to Gorky about it. And remember, lads: no whining!"

"Very good—no whining!" squealed a little chap.

And Kalina Ivanovich waved his hand, and said:

"Go ahead, lads, don't be afraid!"

PART THREE

I NAILS

I was to start taking over the Kuryazh colony in two days, but first there was something I had to do at the Commanders' Council, something I had to say to them, to enable the colonists to organize, without my help, the hard task of getting all our property ready for transport to Kuryazh.

Within the colony, fears, hopes, "nerves," sparkling eyes, horses, carts, a veritable tidal wave of trifles, of objects listed as essential, and nevertheless forgotten, of ropes mislaid, had all become so inextricably tangled, that I did not believe in the ability of the boys to disentangle them.

Only one night had passed since we had received the agreement for the transfer to Kuryazh, and a campaigning spirit already prevailed in the colony, affecting everybody's mood, desires, and tempo. If the colonists were not afraid of Kuryazh it may have been because they had not seen it in all its glory. I, on the other hand, could not get away from the inner vision of Kuryazh as a terrible, fantastic corpse, capable of seizing me by the throat even though its death had long been officially certified.

It was resolved at the Commanders' Council to send only nine colonists and one teacher with me to Kuryazh. I asked for more. I pointed out to them that, with such small forces, all we should be able to do would be to upset the prestige of the Gorky Colony, that the whole staff of Kuryazh had been discharged, and that there was a great deal of feeling against us there.

Kudlaty, smiling quizzically, answered me:

"It really doesn't make the faintest difference if you take ten with you, or if you take twenty. You won't be able to do anything, anyhow. When everybody comes it'll be different—we'll take them by storm. Don't forget, there are three hundred of them. We must make our arrange-

ments here thoroughly. Think what it will be to load three hundred and twenty hogs! Besides, you've noticed, haven't you, they send us new kids almost every day—perhaps they've gone mad in Kharkov, or perhaps they do it on purpose to annoy us.”

I myself was depressed by the new arrivals. They, as it were, diluted our collective, making it harder for us to preserve the Gorky Colony in its full strength, its purity, and its flexibility. And we should have to master a crowd three hundred strong with our small detachments.

In my preparations for the struggle with Kuryazh I kept before me the idea of a single lightning stroke—the Kuryazhites must be taken by storm. The slightest delay, and hopes of evolution, of “gradual infiltration,” would jeopardize the outcome of our operations. I was well aware that the traditions of Kuryazh anarchy were just as likely to be “gradually infiltrated” as our own forms, traditions and tone. The sages of Kharkov, with their insistence on “gradual infiltration”, confidently advanced the time-honoured notion that the good boys would have a beneficial influence on the bad boys. But I knew very well that the best of boys can easily become wild beasts in a collective based on a flabby organizational structure. I did not cross swords with the sages, calculating with mathematical precision that the decisive blow would have been struck long before any gradual process had time to begin. But the new arrivals were in my way. The wise Kudlaty realized that they would have to be prepared for the transfer to Kuryazh with the same solicitude as everything else under our care.

And so it was not without many an anxious retrospective glance that I left for Kuryazh at the head of the “Advance Mixed Detachment.” Kalina Ivanovich, although he had promised to look after our affairs to the very last moment, was so dejected and so overwhelmed by the thought of the coming parting that he could only stump about among the colonists, recalling with the utmost difficulty the various details of work, and forgetting them again immediately in the rush of an old man's bitter grief. The colonists received the orders of Kalina Ivanovich with respectful affection, replying to them with

a cheerful "very good" and emphatic salute, but they quickly shook off the embarrassing feeling of pity for the old man, and did their work in their own way.

At the head of the colony I left Koval, who feared nothing so much as being cheated by the Lunacharsky Commune, which was to take over from us the estate, the sown fields, and the mill. Representatives of the commune had begun to show themselves in various sectors of the Gorky Colony, and the red beard of Nesterenko, their chairman, was constantly turning distrustfully in the direction of Koval. Olga Voronova disliked the diplomatic contests between these two, and would try to get rid of Nesterenko.

"Go home, Nesterenko! What are you afraid of? There aren't any crooks here. Go home, do, now!"

Nesterenko, smiling cunningly, with his eyes alone, nodded towards the angrily flushing Koval.

"D'you know what that man is, Olga? He's a kulak! He's a kulak by nature."

Koval, now thoroughly worked up, continued stubbornly:

"And what did you think? Did you think we were going to give up everything to you, free, after the boys have put such a lot of work into it? Why should we? Just because you're taking over our estate? Look at your fat bellies, and you pretend to be poor! You'll have to pay!"

"But do think! How am I going to pay you?"

"Why should I have to think about that? What did *you* think about when I asked you if we were to sow the fields? You gave yourself high-and-mighty airs then—sow them! And now, kindly pay! For the wheat, and for the rye, and for the beets."

His head on one side, Nesterenko unfastened his tobacco pouch, felt delicately for something in the bottom of it, and smiled guiltily:

"It's quite true, you're right there . . . the seedgrain . . . of course. But why should you ask payment for the work? The boys might have been working for society, as they say."

Koval leaped fiercely from his chair, and, turning round on his way out, his feelings worked to fever pitch, exclaimed:

"Why should they, you damned drones! Are you sick, or what? Call yourselves a commune, and want to profit by

child labour! . . . If you don't pay I shall give everything to the Goncharovka people."

Olga Voronova chivied Nesterenko away, and a quarter of an hour later she was whispering with Koval in the garden, reconciling within her bosom, as only a woman can, her conflicting sympathies for the colony and the commune. The colony was like a mother for Olga, but in the commune she ruled supreme, impressing the men with the broad scope of the agronomical experience she had gained with Sherre, and coaxing the women with her dynamic, and often virulent advocacy of woman's emancipation. For crises and occasions of all sorts she had in reserve a battering-ram composed of a score of lads and lasses who followed her as if she were Joan of Arc. She won all hearts by her innate culture, her energy, and her boundless optimism. Surveying her with pride, Koval would emit a terse: "That's our handiwork!"

Olya gloried in the generous gift left by the Gorky Colony to the Lunacharsky Commune, in the form of the well-regulated estate with its six-field system, but for us this gift spelt catastrophe. Nowhere is the importance of past endeavour felt so keenly as in agriculture. We knew—none better!—what it had cost to weed, to organize crop rotation, to set in order, to see to every detail of equipment, to look after and keep intact each element of the slow, endless, almost imperceptible process. Our true wealth was hidden away somewhere deep down, among the interwoven roots of plants, in roomy, scientifically-erected stalls, in the very heart of such simple objects as wheels, the shafts of carts, gear and sails for the wind-mill. And now, when so much had to be abandoned, and so much to be torn from its native soil and thrust into the cramped quarters of stuffy freight cars, it was not hard to understand why Sherre looked blue, and why all his movements were like those of a victim of disaster.

His melancholy mood did not, however, prevent Eduard Nikolayevich from getting his treasures ready for the journey with his usual methodical calm, and I had little difficulty in shaking off the thought of his drooping figure as I left for Kharkov with the advance detachment. For all around me the colonists, like so many elves,

danced in a joy and excitement precluding anxious thoughts.

The happiest hours of my life were passing away. I sometimes regret now that at the time I did not dwell on them more longingly and attentively, that I did not force myself to gaze firmly and steadily at this life, that I did not commit to memory forever the lights, the lines, and the colours of every moment, every movement, every word.

Even then I realized that a hundred and twenty colonists did not merely represent a hundred and twenty waifs who had found a home and work for themselves. No, they represented hundreds of moral endeavours, hundreds of harmoniously co-ordinated units of energy, torrents of beneficent rain, which even that self-willed, opinionated wench, nature, awaited with joyous impatience.

In those days you would hardly ever come across a colonist walking at an ordinary pace. They all got into the habit of running from place to place, flitting like swallows, with a businesslike twittering, clear, joyous discipline, and grace of movement. There was actually a moment when I indulged in heretical musings, as to happy people not needing any authority over them, for its place could be taken by that joyful, novel human instinct which shows every one what he has to do, how to do it, and the reason for doing it.

Such moments did occur. But I would rapidly be dashed from these anarchistic heights by all sorts of sights and sounds. Alyoshka Volkov, to give a single instance, would bend his blotchy countenance wrathfully upon a miscreant, and rate him soundly:

"What are you doing, you blockhead! Look what nails you're using for that box! I suppose you think three-inch nails can be picked up in the road!"

The eager, flushing boy thus reproved would lower the hammer helplessly, rubbing his bare heel with it in his embarrassment.

"And what size is needed?"

"You can use old nails for that, you know, ones that have been used before. But wait a minute! Where did you get these—the three-inch ones?"

And then the fat would be in the fire. Volkov would stand over the youngster, wrathfully picking to pieces a

character which had shown itself so glaringly inadequate in regard to new three-inch nails.

Yes, tragedy still stalks the world!

Very few people know what a used nail is. It has to be wrenched by all sorts of cunning means out of old boards, broken defunct objects, from which it emerges crooked, gouty, rusty, its head awry, its point blunted, often bent in two or three, often distorted into spirals and knots which the ablest locksmith in the world could not have fashioned. It has to be straightened with a hammer on a fragment of rail, the wielder of the hammer squatting on his heels, and hammering his fingers almost as often as the nail. And when, finally, the old nail is hammered again into something, it is apt to bend, to snap, and to go anywhere but in the right place. No doubt it was all this which inspired the Gorky youngsters with such a loathing for old nails, tempting them into all sorts of suspicious dealings with new ones, dealings which formed the steppingstones to official investigations on the part of the Commanders' Council and cast a cloud over the great and joyous adventure of our move to Kuryazh.

And it wasn't only nails! Unpainted tables, pretentious benches, innumerable stools of all sorts, old wheels, cobblers' lasts, worn files, tattered books—all the odds and ends which accumulate as a result of settled residence and thriftiness—obscured the glory of our heroic campaign. . . . But we could not bring ourselves to throw them away.

And then the new arrivals! I could hardly bear to look at them, when I came across their slack, unfamiliar figures. Wouldn't it be better to leave them here, to hand them over to some needy children's home, throwing in by way of bribe a pair of piglings or a sack of potatoes? I was always going over them and putting them in batches, classifying them according to their human and social values. By now I had a sufficiently trained eye, and a multiplicity of outward signs—an almost imperceptible shade of expression, the tones of a voice, a person's gait, and many another trifling quirk of individuality, perhaps even a smell—enabled me to tell at a glance with a fair degree of precision, the finished product which the given specimen of raw material could be expected to yield.

Take Oleg Ognev, for example. Was it worth while taking him to Kuryazh, or should he be left behind? Somehow I felt he ought not to be abandoned. He was an unusual and interesting specimen, Oleg—an adventurer, a traveller, and a coxcomb; possibly a descendant of ancient Normans, for he was, like them, tall, loose-limbed, and blond. Perhaps a few generations of fine Russian intellectuals had intervened between Oleg and his Varangian ancestors, for he had a high brow, and a wide but clever mouth, balanced by a pair of fine, cheerful grey eyes. Oleg had got himself mixed up in an affair of postal orders, and was therefore brought to the colony under convoy of two militiamen. He stepped jauntily and good-humouredly between them, gazing with curiosity into his own uncertain future. When released from surveillance, Oleg listened to my initiatory adjurations with courteous, grave attention, showed pleasure on being introduced to the older colonists, surveyed the younger ones with wondering delight, and said, standing in the middle of the yard, his slender legs set wide apart:

“So this is a colony! The Maxim Gorky Colony, is it? Fancy that! I shall have to try it!”

He was placed in the eighth detachment and Fedorenko said, narrowing one eye at him suspiciously:

“I don’t suppose you’re much of a worker! Are you, now? And then your jacket’s not very suitable, you know....”

Oleg glanced smiling at his smart jacket, held up one corner for inspection, and looked cheerfully into the commander’s face.

“That’s nothing, Comrade Commander! My jacket won’t be in the way, would you like me to give it to you?”

Fedorenko broke out in peals of laughter, in which he was joined by the other athletes of the eighth detachment.

“Come on, then, let’s see if I can get it on!”

Fedorenko went about in Oleg’s short coat till the evening, amusing the colonists by a smartness never before seen in our midst, but at nightfall he returned it to its owner, saying sternly:

“Put that thing away, and put a sport shirt on, you’ll be trudging behind the seed drill tomorrow.”

Oleg gazed at the commander in astonishment, and cast a quizzical glance at his jacket.

"You mean this garment doesn't suit here?"

The next morning he appeared in the sport shirt, murmuring to himself ironically:

"Now you're a proletarian! You've got to trudge behind a seed drill. This is something new."

Everything went wrong with Oleg in his new occupation. For some reason or other the seed drill did not suit him, and he trudged mournfully behind it, stumbling over mounds, and every now and then dancing on one leg in a clumsy attempt to extract a splinter. He could not manage the blades of the seed drill when in motion, and every three minutes would cry to the leader:

"Signor, stop your beasts, there's a little obstruction here."

Fedorenko changed Oleg's task, and sent him to bring out the other team, with the harrow, but half an hour later Oleg caught Fedorenko up, and informed him politely:

"Comrade Commander, d'you know what? Mine has sat down."

"Your what?"

"My horse. Please come and see—it sat down, and it's still sitting down. Do go and talk to it!"

Fedorenko hastened up to the reposing Mary, and broke out furiously:

"What the devil . . . how on earth did you manage it? You've muddled everything up. What's this shaft doing here?"

Oleg did his best to enter into the feelings of a farmer.

"You see, some flies were buzzing about, or something. So she sat down, and she ought to be working, oughtn't she?"

Mary looked balefully at Oleg from under the collar, which was almost touching her ears. Fedorenko, too, was angry.

"Sitting! A mare never sits down! Get her up!"

Oleg seized the reins, and shouted at Mary:

"Gee-up!"

Fedorenko laughed.

"What's the good of shouting 'gee-up.' You're not a cabdriver, are you?"

"You see, Comrade Commander...."

"Why do you keep on calling me comrade commander?"

"What shall I call you, then?"

"I have a name, haven't I?"

"Oh-h! You see, Comrade Fedorenko, then—I'm not a cabdriver of course, and believe me I've never been on intimate terms with any Mary before. I've had some friends who were called Mary, but it was quite different with them, you see ... there was none of those traces and horse collars...."

With eyes which were at once infuriated, and full of restrained force, Fedorenko regarded the shabby elegance of the Varangian figure. Then he spat.

"Now you shut up, and see to the harness!"

In the evening, throwing out his hands, Fedorenko passed sentence—unhurriedly, with the broad stroke of his Ukrainian dialect:

"What the devil's the use of him? He can gobble up pies, and make up to the girls ... but I don't think he'll do for us. If you ask me, he shouldn't be taken to Kuryazh."

The commander of the eighth looked gravely and anxiously at me, awaiting confirmation of the sentence he had passed. I realized that the suggestion came from the whole eighth detachment, which was notorious for the solidity of its convictions, and the demands it imposed on others. But I answered Fedorenko as follows:

"We'll take Ognev to Kuryazh. You explain to the detachment that they've got to make a worker of Oleg. If you can't do it, nobody can, and Oleg will become an enemy of the Soviet government, and a tramp. *You* know what I mean!"

"I know!" said Fedorenko.

"You explain it to the detachment, then."

"All right, we shall have to talk it over," agreed Fedorenko with alacrity, but with the same alacrity he raised his hand to the back of his head in the gesture habitual to us Slavs, when in perplexity.

And so Oleg was to go with us. And Uzhikov? I replied with finality and wrath that Arkadi Uzhikov ought not to be taken—what the hell was Uzhikov to me, anyhow! In

any other industry if such worthless raw material is foisted on a man, he can form half a dozen committees, draw up as many acts, appeal to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs or some other authority, in the last resort even write to *Pravda*, and one way or another he will expose the guilty party. No one is expected to turn out engines from old buckets, or canned food from potatopeelings. And am I expected to make not an engine, or canned food, but a real Soviet citizen out of Uzhikov?

Arkadi Uzhikov had spent his life from childhood up, hanging about the highroads, and all the chariots of history and geography had passed over him with their heavy wheels. His father had abandoned the family when Uzhikov was very young, and his place at the family hearth had been filled by a new parent, some puppet in the Punch-and-Judy show which was the Denikin government. Together with this government, Uzhikov's new daddy had decided to go abroad, taking the family with him. A whimsical fate landed them in Jerusalem, of all places. In this city Arkadi Uzhikov lost everything that had ever stood for parents, for these died, victims of human ingratitude, rather than of disease, leaving Arkadi alone in the unfamiliar environment of Arabs and other "national minorities." In the course of time Uzhikov's real father, having successfully mastered the intricacies of the New Economic Policy, and consequently become a member of some sort of combine, decided all of a sudden to reconsider his attitude to his progeny. He discovered the whereabouts of his unfortunate son and availed himself of the international situation so skilfully, that Arkadi was put on a steamer, and actually provided with an adult escort to the port of Odessa, to be enfolded in the parental embraces. But two months had scarcely passed before the parent was unpleasantly struck by certain glaring effects of his son's foreign education. Arkadi's nature was a happy combination of the broad Russian scope with Arab imagination—and so Papa Uzhikov was completely cleaned out. Arkadi managed to sell on the street-market not only such family treasures as a watch, silver spoons and glass holders, not only suits and underclothes, but the very furniture, and even used his father's office cheque

book, his youthful autograph displaying a touching family likeness to the elaborate signature of his parent. Those same powerful hands which had so recently removed Arkadi from the Holy Land, were set in motion a second time. In the very heat of our active preparations for the move, I had a call from Uzhikov senior, an individual with a European gloss and a kind of professional respectability, who showed few signs of wear and tear. Planting himself opposite me, he gave me a detailed biography of Arkadi, ending with a scarcely perceptible tremor in his voice:

“You alone can give me back my son!”

I looked at the son, seated on the sofa, and felt such an antipathy for him, that I should have liked to give him back then and there to his troubled father. But as well as his son, the father had brought me a paper, and I was not in a position to argue with a paper. Arkadi remained in the colony.

He was tall, lean, and awkward. Enormous transparent pink ears stuck out on either side of his flaming head, and his face, with its faint eyebrows, peppered with large freckles, seemed to be dragged downwards by the heavy drooping nose, which was out of all proportion to his other features. Arkadi always looked from under his brows, but it would have been better if he had never looked at all, so powerful was the disgust inspired by his dull eyes, with their yellowish whites. To all this add a drooling everopen mouth and a perpetual hangdog expression, and the portrait is complete.

I felt sure the colonists would beat him up in dark corners, knock against him when they met, that no one would want him in the same bedroom, at the same table, that they would loathe him with that healthy human distaste which I myself was only able to suppress by the exercise of pedagogical efforts.

From his very first day Uzhikov began to steal from his comrades and wet his bed. Mitka Zhevely came to me, knitting his black brows, and asked gravely:

“Anton Semyonovich, do explain to me why we should take a fellow like that. Look—from Jerusalem to Odessa, from Odessa to Kharkov, from Kharkov to us, and from here to Kuryazh! Why should he be carted about?

Haven't we got enough to take, as it is? Do explain!"

I maintained silence. Mitka waited patiently for my answer, frowning at the smiling Lapot. Then he began again:

"I've never seen such a creature! He ought to be given a dose of strychnine, or we ought to make a ball out of bread, and put pins inside it, and feed it to him."

"He wouldn't take it," said Lapot, laughing.

"Who? Uzhikov? Let's try, just for fun—he'd gulp it down. You know how greedy he is. And how disgustingly he eats! Ugh, I can't bear to think of it!"

Mitka shuddered fastidiously. Lapot looked at him, raising martyred eyes. Secretly I was on their side, asking myself:

"What's to be done? Uzhikov brought such papers...."

Seated on the wooden sofa, the boys brooded over the situation. Suddenly the clean, smiling countenance of Vaska Alekseyev peeped into the room, and Mitka instantly cheered up.

"As many as you like of that sort!" he said. "Come here, Vaska!"

Blushing furiously, Vaska proffered his bashful smile and infatuated glance to Mitka, dropped on to Mitka's knees, and breathed out his overwhelming emotion in an indescribable sound—part sigh, part groan, part laugh.

Vaska Alekseyev had come to the colony of his own free will, had come tear-stained, broken by the brutality of life. He had walked straight into a session of the Commanders' Council, one wild, rainy evening. Such apparently unfavourable meteorological conditions turned out lucky for Vaska, who, it may be, would never have been admitted in good weather. But as it was, the commander of the mixed sentry detachment brought him to the office, and said:

"What shall I do with this? I found him crying in the doorway, and it's raining."

The commanders interrupted their debate on current affairs and bent their gaze on the new arrival. He rapidly got rid of all signs of grief by every means at his disposal—sleeves, fingers, fists, the hem of his jacket, his cap—and blinked moist-eyed at Vanya Lapot, instantly recognizing in him the chairman. He had a nice rosy face and

neat country boots, and his short, worn jacket alone was out of harmony with his decent appearance. He was about thirteen years old.

"What d'you want?" asked Lapot sternly.

"I want to be in the colony," said the little chap solemnly.

"What for?"

"My dad's gone away, and my mother says—go anywhere you like."

"What! A mother couldn't say that!"

"She's not my real mother."

Only for a moment did Lapot seem perplexed by this new detail.

"Wait a bit! What's this? All right, she's not your real mother. Then your father ought to take you. He's bound to, you know."

Once more tears shone in the little chap's eyes, and once more he set about to destroy all traces of them before beginning to answer. The keen eyes of the commanders softened at the applicant's quaint ways. At last, with an involuntary sigh, the little chap brought out:

"My father—my father's not my real father, either."

There was a moment's silence in the Council, and then a loud, shrill laugh broke out. Lapot, laughing till he almost cried, said:

"You're in a nice muddle, brother! Tell us about it!"

The applicant, simply, without the slightest affectation, without removing his gaze from Lapot's smiling countenance, told us that he was called Vaska, and his surname was Alekseyev. His father, a cabdriver, had left his family and disappeared, and his mother had married a tailor. Then his mother had begun to cough, and last year she had died, and the tailor had "gone and married somebody else." And now, at Easter, he had gone to Kongrad, and sent word that he was never coming back any more. He also wrote: "You can shift for yourselves."

"We shall have to take him," said Kudlaty. "But you're lying, perhaps, after all. Eh? Who taught you?"

"Taught me? A man—who lives over there—he taught me—he said the lads live there and sow the fields."

And so we took Vaska Alekseyev into the colony. He soon became a general favourite, and the question of dis-

pensing with Vaska at Kuryazh was not so much as raised in our confidential discussions. It was not raised, if only owing to the fact that Vaska had been accepted by the Commanders' Council, and consequently was fully entitled to be considered a "prince of the blood."

Among the newly-arrived were also Mark Scheinhaus and Vera Berezovskaya.

Mark Scheinhaus had been sent by the Odessa Commission for Juvenile Delinquency for stealing, as the paper he brought with him testified. He arrived with a militiaman, but my very first glance at him told me that the Commission had been mistaken—nobody with eyes like his could be a thief. I will not endeavour to describe Mark's eyes. Such eyes are seldom met with in real life, they are only to be found in the works of painters like Nesterov, Kaulbach, Raphael, in their depiction of saints, preferably in the faces of madonnas. It is hard to understand how they came to be in the countenance of a poor Jew from Odessa. And Mark Scheinhaus displayed every sign of poverty—his lean sixteen-year-old body was barely covered, and his feet were thrust into the disreputable remains of boots riddled with holes. But his face was smooth and clean, and his curly hair was nicely combed. He had such long, thick eyelashes that it seemed every sweep of them ought to have caused a draught.

"It says here that you have been stealing," I said. "Is it really true?"

A stream of light that could be almost felt radiated from the black, saintly melancholy of Mark's enormous eyes. He raised his eyelashes as if with an effort, and bent his sad, lean, pale visage upon me.

"It's true, of course. I . . . yes . . . I did steal."

"From hunger?"

"No, I can't say it was from hunger. I didn't steal from hunger."

Mark still kept his solemn, mournful, steady gaze on me.

I felt ashamed. Why was I torturing a weary, sad boy? I tried to make my smile as cordial as possible, and said:

"I'm not going to remind you of that. If you stole, you stole. All sorts of things happen to people, they must be forgotten. Have you been to school anywhere?"

"Yes, I've been to school. I've been through five classes, and I want to go on."

"That's fine! You'll go into Taranets's fourth detachment. Take this note and go and find Taranets, the commander of the fourth. He'll do everything necessary."

Mark accepted the sheet of paper, but instead of moving towards the door stood irresolutely at the table.

"Comrade Director, there's something I have to tell you, I must tell you. All the way here I kept thinking how I should tell you, and I can't stand it any longer!"

Mark smiled sadly and looked straight into my eyes with an imploring glance.

"What is it? Of course you can tell me! Out with it!"

"I've been in a colony before, and I can't say it was so bad there. But I felt that my character was being ruined. The Denikinites killed my father, and I'm a Komsomol, and I'm getting soft. That's wrong, I know that myself. I ought to have a Bolshevik character. It began to worry me. If I tell you everything, will you promise not to send me back to Odessa?"

Mark turned the full blaze of his eyes on my face.

"Whatever you tell me, I won't send you away."

"Thank you, Comrade Director! I thought that's what you'd say, and I made up my mind. I thought so because I read an article in the *News* called 'Where the new man is being forged,' about your colony. I understood at once where I had to go, and I began to beg to be sent here. But ask as I might, nothing was any good. They told me—'that's a colony for delinquents, why should you go there?' So I ran away from the colony, and got straight on to a tram. It all happened so quickly, you can't imagine! Scarcely had I put my hand into a man's pocket, when somebody got hold of me and wanted to beat me up. And then they took me to the Commission."

"And did the Commission believe the charge against you?"

"Why shouldn't they? They're decent, just people, and there were witnesses and an act, and everything as it should be. I said I'd picked pockets before."

I laughed openly. I was gratified to discover that my distrust of the Commission's findings was justified. Mark,

reassured, went off to arrange matters with the fourth detachment.

Vera Berezovskaya was quite another proposition.

It was winter. I had gone to the station to see Maria Kondratyevna Bokova off, and hand her a very urgent dispatch for Kharkov. I found Maria Kondratyevna on the platform, arguing violently with a sentry on railway duty. The sentry had a girl of about sixteen by the hand. Her bare feet were thrust into galoshes, and she was wearing a short, old-fashioned dolman, probably the gift of some kindly old soul. The girl's uncovered head was in an appalling state—her fair, matted hair was no longer fair, jutting out behind one ear in a solid clot, and clinging to her cheeks and brow in dark, sticky wisps. She was trying to free her hand, smiling broadly and seductively all the time. And she was very pretty. But in her bright, laughing eyes—silver-grey, Russian eyes—I caught sight of the dull fire sometimes seen in the helpless despair of a stricken animal. Her smile was the only form of defence known to her, her pitiful diplomacy.

"It's all very well for you to reason, Comrade," the sentry was saying. "You don't know the trouble we have with them!"

He turned on the girl:

"Were you, or were you not on the train last week? Were you, or were you not drunk?"

"Me? Drunk? He's making it up!" said the girl, now throwing a frankly seductive smile at the sentry. But at the same time she tugged her hand out of his grasp, putting her fingers to her mouth as if they hurt her.

"You let me alone!" she murmured, demurely coquettish.

The sentry moved towards her, but she stepped back three paces, and laughed loudly, paying not the slightest heed to the crowd beginning to form around us.

Maria Kondratyevna turned her head in embarrassment, and caught sight of me.

"Anton Semyonovich! Dear Anton Semyonovich!"

She drew me aside, and whispered eagerly:

"Listen—it's simply terrible! Only think of it! Why—she's a woman, a beautiful woman! I don't mean only because she's beautiful, of course. . . . It has to be stopped!"

"Maria Kondratyevna, what d'you want?"

"Want? Don't pretend, you monster!"

"I like that!"

"Yes, a monster! Nothing but your advantage, nothing but calculations, eh? This wouldn't be to your advantage, eh? Let the sentry cope with her, eh?"

"But listen—she's a prostitute! How can you expect me to take her into a collective with boys?"

"Stop your reasoning, you miserable . . . pedagogue!"

I turned pale at the insult, and said ferociously:

"All right! She shall go with me this minute to the colony."

Maria Kondratyevna put her arms round me.

"Darling Makarenko, oh, you darling! Thanks, thanks!"

She rushed up to the girl, seized her by the shoulders, and whispered something in her ear. The sentry bawled at the onlookers.

"What are you gaping at? D'you think you're at the cinema? Go away, and see to your own business!"

He then spat, shrugged his shoulders, and departed.

Maria Kondratyevna led up to me the still smiling damsel.

"Let me introduce you—Vera Berezovskaya. She agrees to go to the colony. Vera, this is your director. He's a very kind man, you know, and you'll be all right there."

Vera smiled at me, too.

"I'll go . . . I don't mind."

Maria Kondratyevna and I took leave of one another, and then I went with my new charge to the sleigh.

"You'll be cold," I said, getting a horse blanket from under the seat.

Vera wrapped herself up in the horse blanket, asking cheerfully:

"What'll I be doing there, in the colony?"

"You'll do lessons, and you'll work."

Vera kept silence for a long time, and then suddenly broke out in a capricious "feminine" voice:

"Oh, Lord! I'm not going to do lessons, and don't you think it!"

Night was approaching—cloudy, dark, ominous. We were in the field path by now, skidding on the slippery

surface. I said to Vera quietly, so that Soroka, who was on the box, should not hear:

"All our boys and girls do lessons, and you will. You'll be a good scholar. And a good life will begin for you."

She leaned close to me, and said loudly:

"A good life! Oh, how dark it's getting! I'm afraid! Where are you taking me?"

"Be quiet!"

She fell silent. We entered the copse. Soroka was swearing softly at someone, probably at whoever invented darkness and narrow forest paths.

"Shall I tell you something?" whispered Vera.

"Go ahead!"

"D'you know what? I'm pregnant."

A few minutes later I said:

"Aren't you making it all up?"

"No. Why should I make things up? It's true, really it is!"

The lights of the colony twinkled in the distance. We fell to whispering again.

"We'll get rid of it for you," I said: "How many months?"

"Two!"

"We'll get rid of it."

"They'll laugh!"

"Who will?"

"Your . . . kids!"

"Nobody will know."

"They'll find out."

"No. I'll know, and you will. And nobody else."

Vera gave a knowing laugh.

"Oh, you go on!"

I said nothing. We ascended the slope to the colony at a footpace. Soroka clambered out of the sleigh, walking beside the horse's head, and whistling. Vera suddenly bent over my knees, and began to weep bitterly.

"What's the matter with her?" asked Soroka.

"She's in trouble."

"Relations, probably," surmised Soroka. "There's nothing worse than relations."

He got back on to the box and brandished his whip.

"Trot, Comrade Mary, trot! That's the way!"

We drove into the colony courtyard.

Maria Kondratyevna came back from Kharkov in three days. I told her nothing about Vera's tragedy. And a week later we gave it out in the colony that Vera had to be sent to the hospital with kidney trouble. She returned from the hospital meek and mournful, and asked me in a low voice:

"What am I to do now?"

I thought a moment, and answered discreetly:

"Now you'll begin to live."

Her embarrassed and vacant glance showed me that nothing was so hard or so puzzling for her as to live.

Of course, Vera Berezovskaya will go with us to Kuryazh. As it turned out, everybody was to go, even the twenty newcomers so recently flung at me by the People's Commissariat for Education, without the slightest consideration for my strategic plans. How nice it would have been if no one but the original, well-tried eleven Gorky detachments had been going to Kuryazh with me! These detachments had fought their way through the six arduous years of our history. They had so many thoughts, traditions, experiences, ideals, and customs in common. With them, I felt there need be nothing to fear. How nice it would have been but for these new ones, who, while apparently engulfed by the detachments, seemed to be everywhere, causing me uneasiness whenever I came across them: they walked and talked all wrong, and still retained the crude, inferior faces they had brought with them.

Never mind! My eleven detachments seemed to be wrought out of steel. But what a catastrophe it would be if those eleven little detachments came to grief in Kuryazh! On the eve of the departure of the Advance Mixed, my soul was filled with grief and confusion. And Dzhurinskaya arrived by the evening train, locked herself into my room with me, and said:

"Anton Semyonovich! I'm afraid! It's not too late, yet. You can still cry off!"

"Has anything happened, Lyubov Savelyevna?"

"I was at Kuryazh yesterday. It's appalling! I can't stand such sights! I've been in prison, you know, and at

the front, and I never felt so miserable in my life as I do now."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know, I don't know how to put it. Just try and imagine—three hundred absolutely depraved, embittered boys, sunk in lethargy—it's a kind of bestial, biological ruin, you know! It's not even anarchy! And the poverty, the stink, the lice! You mustn't go, it was a mad idea!"

"Wait a minute! If Kuryazh makes such a terrible impression on you, that's all the more reason for doing something about it."

Lyubov Savelyevna sighed heavily.

"Oh, it can't be dismissed in a sentence! Of course something must be done, it's our duty, but your collective ought not to be sacrificed. You don't know its value, Anton Semyonovich—it should be protected, developed, improved, it can't be thrown overboard at the first whim!"

"Whose whim?"

"I don't know whose," said Lyubov Savelyevna wearily. "I don't mean you, your attitude is quite a special one. But—oh, yes, this is what I wanted to tell you—you have many more foes than you are aware of."

"Well, what about it?"

"There are people who would be glad if you came to grief in Kuryazh."

"I know that."

"There you are then! Let's be serious. Let's give it up! It's not too late!"

I could only smile at Dzhurinskaya's proposal.

"You are our friend. We value your care and affection more than I can say. But, forgive me, aren't you taking up the old pedagogical attitude?"

"I don't understand."

"The struggle at Kuryazh is necessary not only for Kuryazh and for my enemies, it is necessary for ourselves, too, for each one of our colonists. This struggle is of vital importance. Just go about among the colonists, and you'll see that retreat is now impossible."

The next morning the advance detachment left for Kharkov. Lyubov Savelyevna went with us, in the same carriage.

2

THE ADVANCE DETACHMENT

Volokhov was at the head of the advance detachment. He was taciturn, never gesticulated, and seldom changed his expression, but knew how to show his attitude to events or people, and this attitude was always tinged with a certain lazy irony and an imperturbable self-confidence. In their primitive forms these qualities are inherent in every self-respecting hoodlum, but when shaped and polished within a collective they lend the individual a certain noble and restrained glamour, the profound play of calm, unconquerable strength. Such commanders are needed in the struggle, for their boldness and self-control may be counted on. My greatest consolation was the fact that Volokhov never wasted a thought on Kuryazh and the Kuryazhites. Every now and then, goaded thereto by the perpetual chatter of the boys, Volokhov would reluctantly contribute his own retort:

"Stop gassing about these Kuryazh kids! You'll find they're made of flesh and blood, just like other people."

But this did not prevent him from regarding the composition of the advance detachment with the utmost seriousness. He considered every candidate conscientiously and silently, and gave his decisions with authoritative brevity!

"He won't do! Hasn't got the guts!"

The Advance Mixed was very ingeniously made up. Every one in it was a Komsomol, and at the same time all the main ideas and special skills to be found in the colony were represented. Its members were as follows:

1. Vitka Bogoyavlensky, upon whom the Commanders' Council had bestowed a new name—and what a name! They renamed him—Gorkovsky! Gorkovsky was lean and plain, but as clever as a fox terrier. He was splendidly disciplined, always ready for action, and had his own opinion about everything, sizing up other people rapidly and decisively. Gorkovsky's great talent lay in his ability to see through any boy, summing him up at a glance with unerring precision. At the same time he never lost sight of essentials, and knew how to synthesize his conception of the individual in terms of the collective,

thereby enriching his knowledge of the group and discovering tendencies, distinctions, and typical phenomena.

2. Mitka Zhevily—our old friend, the most successful and charming exponent of the true Gorky spirit. Mitka's development was a happy one, and he had become a graceful youth with a well-set head, and a bright diamond-black glance from slightly slanting eyes. There were always plenty of little chaps in the colony striving to imitate Mitka's energetic speech with its accompaniment of brief, unexpected gesture, the order and cleanliness of his clothes, his gait, and his deep-rooted, but gay and good-humoured loyalty to the colony. Mitka regarded our transfer to Kuryazh as an important affair of immense political significance, was convinced that we had discovered the right forms for the "organization of kids," and considered that our discovery ought to be spread abroad for the benefit of the proletarian republic.

3. Mikhail Ovcharenko—not a particularly bright lad, but a splendid worker, and extremely enthusiastic about the colony and its interests. Misha had a very complicated past, the details of which he himself had great difficulty in mastering. He had lived in almost all the towns in the Union, but not one of these towns seemed to have contributed anything to his knowledge or development. He fell in love with the colony from the very first day, and there had hardly ever been a black mark against him. Misha knew how to do all sorts of things, but had no real qualifications, for he could not bring himself to stay at any one lathe, or to work long in any one place. To make up for this he had a real gift for management, could organize the work of a detachment, of packing, of transport; he invariably worked with expedition and success, interspersing his activities with business-like growls and injunctions, only not irritating because there was always about them the pleasant flavour of Misha's well-meant stupidity and inexhaustible good humour. Misha Ovcharenko was the strongest boy in the colony, stronger even than Silanti Otchenash, and Volokhov, in selecting Misha for the detachment, must have been thinking principally of this quality of his.

4. Denis Kudlaty—the strongest personality in the colony during the era of the Kuryazh campaign. Many a

colonist felt his blood run cold when Kudlaty took the floor at a general meeting, and referred to him by name. His was the power to trample an offender in the mud, most lustily, most thoroughly, and to demand his expulsion from the colony in a manner that was appallingly convincing. What made him still more terrible was that he really was a clever fellow, and his arguments were frequently devastating in their weightiness. It was his profound and unshakable conviction that the colony was a useful thing, securely welded and firmly established. No doubt he conceived of it as a well-oiled farm cart in good repair in which one could jog along quietly for thousands of kilometres, then get out, and use the oil can and a hammer for a bit, and get in and go another thousand kilometres. Although Kudlaty was ridiculously like a kulak in his appearance, and always acted kulak parts in our theatre, he was the first organizer of our Komsomol unit and its most active worker. A true Gorkyte, he never wasted an unnecessary word. Orators he regarded with silent disapproval, while long speeches made him feel really sick.

5. Evgenyev was chosen by the commander as a bait to the "toughs." He was a good Komsomol, and a staunch, cheerful comrade, but his speech and all his ways still retained reminiscences of his stormy days in the street and reformatory, and, like the able actor he was, he had no trouble in talking to a man in his own jargon, when necessary.

6. Zhorka Volkov, Koval's right hand in the Komsomol organization, acted as Political Commissar and creator of the new constitution in our mixed detachment. Zhorka was a born politician—fiery, self-assured, determined. Of him Koval said: "Zhorka will touch up their political nerves. They seem to think, confound them, they're living in the imperialist epoch! And if it comes to fighting, Zhorka won't be behindhand either."

7. and 8. Toska Solovyov and Vanka Shelaputin, representatives of the younger generation. They both had smartly-brushed wavy hair, Toska's being fair, and Vanya's auburn. Toska was good-looking in a fresh, youthful way, and Vanya had a snub-nosed, saucy face.

Ninth and last came the colonist Kostya Vetkovsky. His return to the colony came about in the most rapid, prosaic and business-like manner. Three days before our departure Kostya came back to the colony—thin, pallid and embarrassed. He was received in reserved fashion, and Lapot was the only one who teased him.

“Well, have you been to that tight place in the Caucasus—‘take me across’?”

Kostya smiled demurely.

“No! I’m through with all that!”

“A pity!” said Lapot. “Why should the confounded thing stand there for nothing?”

Volokhov narrowed his eyes at Kostya familiarly.

“So you’ve been cramming yourself with all sorts of good things?”

Kostya replied unblushingly:

“Yes, I have!”

“Well, what will you have for the sweet dish?”

Kostya laughed loudly.

“I’m going to wait for the Commanders’ Council,” he said. “You know how good they are at preparing sweet things—and bitter ones, too!”

“We have no time to waste over your menu,” said Volokhov grimly. “But I tell you what—Alyosha Volkov’s got a blister on his heel. You can have his place in the advance detachment. What d’you say, Lapot?”

“I think it’s a good idea.”

“And what about the Council?”

“We’ve declared martial law for the time—we can settle it without the Council.”

And so, unexpectedly to himself and to us, without any proceedings, or “psychology,” Kostya got into the advance detachment. The very next day he was going about in colony dress.

A new teacher, Ivan Denisovich Kirghizov, went with us too. This was a man I had taken in the place of the departing Ivan Ivanovich, luring him from his pedagogical martyrdom in Pirogovka. To the uninitiated observer Ivan Denisovich might have seemed just a village teacher, but in reality he was that very hero whom Russian literature has been so long and so painstakingly seeking. He was thirty years old, kindly, wise, calm, and, above all,

hard-working, the last-named quality being one of which neither the heroes nor the villains of Russian fiction can boast. There was nothing Ivan Denisovich could not do, and he was always doing something, though from a little way off it always seemed as if yet another task could be laid upon him. On closer inspection you would discover that nothing more could be added to his occupations, but, unable in time to rein in your tongue, you would stammer out, blushing slightly:

"Ivan Denisovich, the—er—physics apparatus has to be packed."

And Ivan Denisovich, who had been bending over some box of exercise books, would straighten himself and say, smiling:

"Physics apparatus? Oh yes—all right! I'll take some of the lads, and we'll see to it."

You would move away embarrassed, while Ivan Denisovich, who had already forgotten your cruelty, would be saying sweetly to someone:

"Go and call a few lads, there's a good chap!"

We arrived at Kharkov in the morning. We were met by Inspector Yuryev, of the Department of Public Education, his beaming countenance in full harmony with the brightness of the May morning and our campaigning spirit. He went about clapping shoulders, and exclaiming:

"So these are the Gorkyites! Fine! And Lyubov Savelyevna is here, too! That's fine! Look here! I have a car, and we can go for Khalabuda, and drive all the way to Kuryazh. Will you come, too, Lyubov Savelyevna? That's fine! And the boys can take the suburban train to Ryzhov. It's no distance from Ryzhov—just two kilometres. You can go across the meadows. But I suppose, you must be fed—or shall we wait till we get to Kuryazh?"

The boys looked expectantly at me, and ironically at Yuryev. They were highly sensitized by the spirit of adventure, and their electrified "feelers" stretched out eagerly in the direction of their first Kharkov object of interest—Yuryev.

"You see," I said, "our Advance Mixed is a sort of storm brigade of the Gorky Colony. If we're to drive, let them drive, too. I suppose we could get two cars?"

Yuryev fairly jumped for joy.

"Fine! Upon my word! They do everything in their own way! Isn't that splendid? And look here! I'll hire one at the expense of the Department of Public Education. And look here! I'll go with them myself—with the lads!"

"Come on, then," said Volokhov, showing his teeth in a smile.

"Splendid! Splendid! So off we go! . . . Let's go and hire cars."

Volokhov ordered:

"Go with him, Toska!"

"Very good!" squealed Toska, saluting, and Yuryev, his delighted gaze fixed on Toska, rubbed his hands and fairly danced.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed twice over.

He started towards the square at a run, looking back at Toska, who naturally wasn't going to forget his dignity as a member of the Advance Mixed by skipping about the station.

Our lads exchanged brief glances. Gorkovsky asked quietly:

"Who's that—funny guy?"

The three automobiles reached the top of the Kuryazh hillock in an hour, and drew up behind the dilapidated wall of the old church. A few shaggy, unclean forms moved languidly towards our cars, the tatters of their long ragged trousers trailing behind them. The apparition of Gorkytes, slender as pages, stern as judges, seemed to inspire them with no particular curiosity.

Two teachers approached, exchanging glances which plainly showed their hostility to us.

"Where are we to put them?" they asked and, turning to me: "We can put a bed for you in the teachers' room, and the boys can find themselves places in some of the dormitories."

"We don't care! We'll find places somewhere or other. Where's your director?"

The director turned out to be in town. But a personage attired in light-grey trousers adorned with spots of grease, grudgingly overlooking the unfairness of being made to work out of turn, agreed to show us over the colony. There was nothing new for me here, nor was Yuryev greatly

interested in sight-seeing; Dzhurinskaya maintained a melancholy silence, while the lads, dispensing with the official guide, rushed off to have a look at the colony. Ivan Denisovich followed them with leisurely steps.

Brandishing his stick towards various points in the sky, and recalling certain organizational exploits of his own, Khalabuda began to enumerate the elements of Kuryazh wealth, reducing them all to one common denominator—rye. The lads came running back with bewildered faces. Kudlaty's look seemed to say: "How could you get yourself into such a mess, Anton Semyonovich!"

Mitka Zhevely, his eyes bright with anger, his hands in his pockets, kept looking over his shoulder, and this contemptuous movement did not escape Dzhurinskaya.

"You don't like it here, boys, eh?" she asked.

Mitka did not answer. Suddenly Volokhov burst out laughing.

"It's bound to come to fisticuffs sooner or later, here!"

"What d'you mean?" asked Lyubov Savelyevna, turning pale.

"We'll have to tackle these fellows," Volokhov explained, suddenly seizing by the collar with two fingers, and bringing up to Dzhurinskaya a dark puny little fellow in a long jacket, but barefoot and capless.

"Just look at his ears!"

The little fellow obligingly turned round. His ears were certainly a sight. It was not only that they were black and that the wear-and-tear of life had caused the dirt in them to form a shiny crust, but these ears were further adorned by the angry scars of bleeding sores, partially healed scabs and rashes.

"What's the matter with your ears?" asked Dzhurinskaya.

The little chap smiled diffidently, and started rubbing one leg against the other. And the state of his legs matched that of his ears.

"They're scabs," he answered in a husky voice.

"Aren't you afraid you'll die?" asked Toska.

"Why, heaps of us are like this, and no one has died yet."

For some reason there were hardly any colonists to be seen. In the untidy club, on the spittle-covered stairs,

along the befouled paths, there wandered a few melancholy shapes. The unkempt, stinking dormitories, where not even the rays of the sun could penetrate the fly-specked window-panes, were just as empty.

"Where are all the colonists?" I asked.

The teacher on duty turned away from me haughtily, muttering through his teeth:

"An absolutely superfluous question."

A round-faced boy of about fifteen followed us.

"Well, boy, how's life with you?" I asked him.

He raised an intelligent little face to me, like all the little faces in Kuryazh, unwashed.

"Life?" he answered. "This isn't life! But they say things will be getting better soon—is it true?"

"Who says so?"

"The chaps do. They say soon everything will be different, only they say that we shall be birched for the least little thing."

"Birched? What for?"

"They beat thieves. There's lots of thieves here."

"Tell me, why don't you ever wash your face?"

"How can we? There's no water! The power plant's out of order, and the water can't be pumped up. And then there are no towels, and no soap...."

"Don't they give you any?"

"They used to.... But everything got stolen. Everything gets stolen here. And now there's nothing left in the storeroom...."

"How's that?"

"One night the storeroom was broken into. The padlocks were broken, and everything stolen. The director said he would fire...."

"Well?"

"Well, he didn't. 'I'll fire!' he said, and the lads said: 'Go ahead!' But he didn't fire, he only sent for the militia...."

"Well, and what did the militia do?"

"I don't know."

"And did you take anything from the storeroom?"

"No, I didn't. I wanted to take a pair of trousers, but the older lads were there, and when I got there, all I got was two keys that were lying on the floor."

"When did this happen?"

"In the winter."

"I see. . . . And what's your name?"

"Pyotr Malikov."

We turned in the direction of the school, Yuryev listening to our conversation in silence. Khalabuda, lagging a little behind, was surrounded by Gorkyites, who have an astonishing flare for amusing personalities. Khalabuda, his red beard in the air, and his thick gnarled staff trailing behind him, was telling the lads about the crops.

We entered the school. Formerly it had been the monastery hostel rebuilt by the Children's Aid Committee. It was the only building in the colony without any dormitories—a long corridor with long, narrow classrooms on either side. Why had the school been housed here? These rooms were no use for anything but dormitories.

One classroom, its walls covered with posters and feeble children's drawings, was shown to us as the Pioneers' Corner.

Apparently it was kept specially for inspection commissions, and for the sake of political appearances, for we had to wait at least half an hour before the key was found and the Pioneers' Corner could be opened.

We sat on a bench to rest. My lads had sobered down. Vitka whispered cautiously from behind my shoulder:

"Anton Semyonovich! We must sleep in this room. And all of us together. Only don't take their beds! They've got lice, you know, and how!"

Zhevely bent towards me across Vitka.

"Some of the lads here are all right. But how they hate their teachers! You won't be able to make them work unless. . . ."

"Unless what?"

"Unless you make a row."

The order of our taking over had to be discussed. The director had come from town in a cab. Looking at his dull, colourless face, I thought: it's no good giving up such a miserable creature to justice. Who could have appointed such a wretch to the sacred post of director?

The director assumed an aggressive manner, and tried to prove that the colony should be handed over as soon as possible, and that he would not be responsible for anything that might happen.

Yuryev asked:

"What d'you mean—you won't be responsible?"

"Simply that the boys are in a dangerous mood. All manner of excesses may be expected. They have firearms, you know."

"And why is their mood so dangerous? Isn't it your doing, perhaps?"

"My doing? They can see for themselves which way the wind's blowing. You think they don't know? They know everything."

"What, for instance?"

"They know what is in store for them," said the director significantly, and turned still more significantly to the window, as if to show that our very appearance boded ill for the colonists.

Vitka whispered in my ear:

"What a beast! What a beast!"

"Be quiet, Vitka!" I said, and, turning to the director: "Whatever excesses are committed, it is you who will answer for them, whether they take place before or after the handing over of the colony. For that matter I ask nothing better myself than the quickest possible winding-up of all formalities."

It was arranged that the transfer should take place on the morrow at two p. m. The whole staff—there were forty teachers alone—were declared discharged, and told to give up their apartments in the course of the next three days. An extension of five days was allowed for the transfer of personal belongings.

"And when is your supply manager coming?" asked the director.

"We haven't got a supply manager. We will assign one of our pupils to receive inventory."

"I'm not going to hand anything over to a pupil," the director said bristling up.

All this stupidity began to irritate me. And what had he to hand over, anyhow?

"I'll tell you what!" I said. "I personally don't care whether an act is drawn up or not. All I care about is that by the end of three days not a single one of you should be left here."

"Aha, you're afraid we'll be in your way!"

"Exactly!"

Stung by the insult, the director leaped up and made hastily for the door. The teacher on duty followed him. Standing in the doorway the director fired a parthian shot:

"*We* won't interfere—others will do that."

The boys laughed, Dzhurinskaya sighed, Yuryev examined something on the window-sill to cover his embarrassment. Khalabuda alone, studying the posters on the wall, was imperturbable.

"It's time for us to go, I suppose," said Yuryev. "We'll come again tomorrow, won't we, Lyubov Savelyevna?"

Dzhurinskaya looked mournfully at me.

"Don't come!" I begged her.

"Why not?"

"What's the point of your coming? You can't help me, and we should only waste time in talking."

Yuryev took leave a little resentfully. Lyubov Savelyevna said good-bye to the boys and me, pressing our hands warmly.

"You're not afraid? Really?"

They left for town.

We went into the courtyard. Apparently dinner was being served, for pots of borshch were being taken from the kitchen to the dormitories. Kostya Vetkovsky tugged at my sleeve, laughing: Mitka and Vitka had stopped two boys carrying a saucepan.

"Is that the way to do things?" Mitka was saying reproachfully. "What funny people! Don't you know any better? Are you savages?"

I did not at first realize what was happening. Kostya was lifting one of the Kuryazh bread-carriers by the sleeve. Under the other arm the boy was carrying a loaf, most of the crust of which was broken off. Kostya was shaking the abashed boy by his sleeve—the whole sleeve was dripping with borshch, and covered to the elbow with fragments of cabbage and beetroot.

"Look here!" Kostya was helpless with laughter, and the rest of us could not contain ourselves, either, for a piece of meat was clenched in the boy's fist.

"And the other one?"

"Just the same," said Mitka, through his laughter. "They fish out pieces of meat from the borsch on the way. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you idiot! You might at least have rolled up your sleeve!"

"Oh, what a time we shall have here, Anton Semyonovich!" said Kostya.

My boys went off in various directions. The sweet May day leaned over the monastery hill, but the hill did not smile back. It seemed to me that the world was divided into two halves by a transparent, horizontal plane—the upper half was the sky, filled with an azure brilliance, fragrant air, the sun, the flight of birds, and the crests of calm, lofty cloudlets. Right against the sky as it descended towards the earth stood distant groups of huts, attractive copses, and the gay ribbon of a winding brook. The fields, black, green, and rust-coloured, were neatly laid out in the sunshine, as if in preparation for a holiday. Heaven knows whether this was good or bad, but it was nice to look at, simple and charming, and made one want to become a part of the clear May day. And beneath my feet was the befouled soil of Kuryazh, the old walls, saturated with the stench of sweat, incense and bugs, oozing the filth of waifdom. Oh, no, this wasn't the world, it was something else, someone must have made it up!

No one came near me in my wanderings about the colony, but there seemed to be more colonists now. They were watching me from afar. I went into the dormitories. There were lots of them, I simply couldn't make out any place that wasn't a dormitory, in the numerous huts, houses, and annexes. There were a great many colonists in the dormitories now. They were sitting about on heaps of rags, or on the bare boards and iron strips of the beds. There they sat, their hands folded between their ragged knees, digesting their dinner. Some were squashing lice; there were groups of card-players in corners; and other groups supping cold borsch from soot-begrimed saucepans. No one paid the slightest attention to me, I had no existence in this world.

In one of the dormitories I came upon a group of lads who to my astonishment were looking at the pictures in an old number of *Niva*.*

"Tell me, boys," I asked, "what have you done with your pillows?"

All faces were turned towards me. A boy with a pointed nose blandly proffered to my view a subtle, quiz-zical countenance.

"Pillows? You must be Comrade Makarenko, I suppose! Are you?"

"That's me."

"And you're walking about, looking round?"

"That's what I'm doing."

"Tomorrow at two o'clock...."

"Yes, tomorrow at two o'clock," I interrupted. "But you haven't answered my question—where are your pillows?"

"We'll tell you! Shall we?"

He nodded sweetly at me, and made a place for me on the patched, dirty mattress. I sat down.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Vanya Zaichenko."

"Can you read and write?"

"Last year I was in the fourth class, and this winter—I suppose you know—there haven't been any lessons."

"Very well. So where are the pillows and sheets?"

Vanya, his grey eyes lighting up with humour, cast a rapid glance at his comrades, and seated himself on the table. His tattered, discoloured boot pressed against my knee. The others crowded together on the side of the bed. Among them I suddenly recognized the round-faced Malikov.

"So you're here, too!"

"M'h'm! This is our bunch. That's Timka Odaryuk, and that's Ilya Fonarenko."

Timka was red-haired and freckled, without lashes to his eyelids, or prejudice in his smile. Ilya was chubby-faced, pale, spotty, but his eyes were the real thing—hazel, with firmly modelled lids. Vanya Zaichenko regarded the almost empty dormitory across the heads of his

* Pre-revolutionary illustrated weekly.—*Tr.*

comrades, and began to speak in a hushed, conspiratorial voice:

"You want to know where the pillows are, do you? I'll tell you straight out—there aren't any pillows, that's all!"

He suddenly burst out into ringing laughter, flinging out his hands, with the fingers outstretched.

The others laughed too.

"We're all very jolly here," said Zaichenko, "because it's so funny. There aren't any pillows. There used to be, and then—puff, puff—there weren't any!"

Again he laughed.

"Carrots went to bed one night with his head on a pillow, and waked up next morning without any. Puff... and no pillow!"

Zaichenko looked at Odaryuk through the mirthful slits of his eyes. As he laughed he leaned backwards and pressed still harder with his leg against my knee.

"You'll say: if we want pillows, everything must be written down, won't you, Anton Semyonovich? Everything must be counted and written down, mustn't it? When it was issued, and who to, and all that. But here nobody even keeps a list of *people*, let alone pillows! Nobody! And nobody counts them. Nobody!"

"How can that be?"

"It's quite simple! Just like that! Do you think anybody has ever written down that Ilya Fonarenko lives here? Nobody has! Nobody even knows! And nobody knows me! And there's lots here like that—they live here, and then they go and live somewhere else, and then they come back here again. D'you think anybody sent Timka here? Nobody did! He just came and started living here."

"So he likes it here?"

"Oh, no! He came here two weeks ago. He ran away from the Bogodukhov Colony. He wanted to go to the Gorky Colony."

"Do they know about it at Bogodukhov?"

"Don't they just! Everybody knows. Of course they do!"

"Why was he the only one to come here, then?"

"Well, you know, tastes differ. Some fellows don't like strictness. They say it's awfully strict in your colony—a

bugle blows, and you have to come running—up with you!—one, two, one, two! You see? And then—the work! Some of the boys don't want anything of that sort."

"They'll run away," volunteered Malikov.

"The Kuryazh boys?"

"M'h'm. They'll run away. As fast as they can. They say: 'You don't know Makarenko! Why should he get the rewards, and we do all the work?' They'll all run away."

"Where to?"

"There's plenty of places. Aren't there, just! You can go to any colony you like."

"And what about you?"

"Well, you see, this is our bunch," Zaichenko hastened to say cheerfully. "Our bunch is four chaps. And d'you know what? We don't steal. We don't like it. And that's that! Timka, now, oh well, even he wouldn't take anything for himself, only for the bunch...."

Timka flushed good-humouredly from the bed, and tried to look at me through modestly drooping eyelids.

"Well, good-bye, bunch!" I said. "We'll get on all right!"

Smiling, all replied: "Good-bye!"

I proceeded on my way. So I had four on my side already! But there were another two hundred and seventy-six, perhaps more. No doubt Zaichenko was right—there were plenty of people here neither counted nor registered. I suddenly felt appalled by this terrible, uncounted number. How could I have been so fool-hardy as to plunge into this utterly disastrous affair? How could I have risked not merely my own success, but the life of a whole collective? So long as the number 280 was nothing but three figures on a sheet of paper, my strength had seemed unconquerable, but today, when these two hundred and eighty were disposed in a filthy encampment around my infinitesimal boys' detachment, I began to feel a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach, and actually noted a disagreeable and alarming weakness in my knees.

Three persons were approaching me from the middle of the yard. They seemed to be about seventeen years old, their heads were actually neatly trimmed, and they had decent boots on. One of them, who was red-haired, was wearing a fairly new brown jacket, beneath which,

however, a crumpled, food-stained shirt was visible; another was in a leather coat, and the third wore a clean white shirt. The owner of the brown jacket had his hands in his trouser pockets, held his head on one side, and suddenly whistled right in my face a jaunty Odessa street song, exposing a row of fine white teeth. I observed that he had large dull eyes, and reddish shaggy eyebrows. The other two stood beside him, their arms round each other's shoulders, smoking, and ever and anon shifting their cigarettes with a movement of the tongue from one side of their mouth to the other. A few more Kuryazh figures were approaching our group.

The red-haired youth narrowed one eye, and said loudly:

"So you're Makarenko, eh?"

I halted in front of him, and replied calmly, making an enormous effort to prevent my face from expressing anything whatsoever.

"That's my name. And what's yours?"

The red-haired individual whistled again without replying, gazing steadily at me from his narrowed eye, and balanced himself on one foot. Suddenly, turning on his heel, raising his shoulders, and continuing to whistle, he walked away, throwing his legs wide apart, and fumbling in the depths of his pockets.

His mates followed him, still with their arms round one another's shoulders, and chanting deafeningly:

*A lad, a lad, a laddie—
He had a jolly time...*

The group which had formed around me continued to survey me, while I overheard the hushed remark:

"The new director," and the equally hushed reply:
"What's the ruddy difference?"

"Where d'you mean to begin, Comrade Makarenko?"

I looked round—a black-eyed young woman was smiling at me. It was strange to see a snow-white blouse and severe black tie in this place.

"My name's Gulyaeva."

I had heard of her. She was the instructress in the dressmaking shop, the only Party member in Kuryazh. It was a pleasure to look at her. She was beginning to

put on flesh, but she still had a slender waist and shining black curls, and there was about her an aroma of unexpended spiritual forces.

"Let's begin together," I replied cheerfully.

"Oh, no, I'd be no good! I don't know how!"

"I'll teach you."

"All right, then! I came to invite you to the girls, you haven't been to us, yet. They're expecting you. They're simply longing to see you! I'm a bit proud of them—the girls here have been under my influence, there are even three Komsomols among them. Come on!"

We walked towards the two-storey central building.

"You did very well," said Gulyaeva, "in demanding the discharge of the whole staff. Send them packing, every one of them, don't allow any exceptions! And send me away, too."

"Oh, no, we've already arranged about you! And I'm counting on your help."

"Think it over—you may regret it!"

The girls' dormitory was a very big one, containing sixty beds. I was amazed—there was a blanket, old and worn, it is true, on each bed, and under each blanket there were sheets. They even had pillows!

The girls really were awaiting us. They were clad in worn print frocks, almost all of them patched. The oldest of them was fifteen or so.

"How d'you do, girls!" I said.

"Well, I've brought Anton Semyonovich to you," said Gulyaeva. "You wanted to see him."

The girls whispered a greeting, moving quietly towards us, smoothing out the blankets as they passed the beds. For some reason I began to feel very sorry for these little girls, and I wished I could procure for them some little pleasure, however trifling. They seated themselves on their beds around us, and looked timidly at me. I couldn't make out why it was that I felt so sorry for them. Could it have been because they were so pale, with such bloodless lips, and furtive glances, or was it because they wore patched dresses? The thought crossed my mind—girls mustn't be allowed to wear such rags, it might mark them for life—but surely it couldn't have been only for that I pitied them so!

"Tell me how you're getting on, girls," I said.

The girls said not a word, but continued to gaze at me, smiling with their lips alone. Suddenly I realized—they only know how to smile with their lips. They don't know what a real smile is, these girls! I let my gaze travel over their faces, and come to rest on the face of Gulyaeva.

"I'm a person of experience, you know," I said, "but there's something here I don't understand."

Gulyaeva raised her brows:

"And what is that?"

Suddenly a little girl seated right opposite me, a dark little girl in a pink skirt so short that her knees showed, said, with an unblinking stare:

"Come quick with your Gorkytes, it's very dangerous for us, living here."

And suddenly I understood what was wrong: there was fear, real, unmistakable fear on the face of this little dark girl, in her fixed gaze, in the involuntary twitchings of her lips.

"They are terrorized!" I said to Gulyaeva.

"They have a hard life, Anton Semyonovich, they have a very hard life."

Gulyaeva's eyelids grew pink, and she turned quickly towards the window.

"What are you afraid of?" I asked the girls insistently. "Tell me!"

At first timidly, pushing and interrupting each other, and then more boldly and in appalling detail, the girls told me about their life.

They felt comparatively safe only in the dormitory. They were afraid to go into the yard, because the boys persecuted them, pinching them, pestering them with indecent language, peeping into the toilet, and opening the door when they were there. The girls were often hungry, because no food was left for them in the dining room. The boys seized the food, and bore it off to their dormitories. It was forbidden to take food to the dormitories, and the kitchen staff did not allow this, but the boys ignored the kitchen staff, and carried off the saucepans and the bread, and the girls were unable to do this. They would go to the dining room and wait, and then they would be told the boys had taken everything, and there

was nothing to eat—sometimes they would be given a little bread. And it was dangerous to stay in the dining room, for the boys would go in and beat them, calling them prostitutes and still worse names, and trying to teach them all sorts of bad words. In addition to this the boys would demand all sorts of things to sell, and when the girls would not give them, would run into the dormitory, seize a blanket or a pillow, and take them to sell in the town. The girls only dared to wash their clothes in the night, but now it had become dangerous even in the night, the boys keeping guard in the laundry, and doing things that could not be related. Valya Gorodkova and Manya Vasilenko had gone to do some washing, and when they had come back they had cried all night, and the next morning they had run away from the colony nobody knew where. And one girl had complained to the director, and the next day when she had gone to the toilet they had caught her, and smeared her face with ... the stuff in the toilet. Everybody was saying it was going to be different now, but some of the boys said nothing would come of it, because there were very few Gorkytes, and they'd all be driven away, anyhow.

Gulyaeva listened to the girls without taking her eyes off my face. I smiled, not so much at her, as at the tears she had just shed.

When the girls had finished their melancholy narrative, one of them, whose name was Smena, asked me solemnly:

"Tell us, are such things allowed in a Soviet country?"

"What you have told me," I replied, "is a great disgrace, and such a disgrace should not and will not be allowed under the Soviet government. In a few days everything will be changed here. You'll have a happy life, nobody will do you any harm, and we'll throw away these dresses."

"In a few days?" a flaxen-haired girl, seated on a window-sill, said thoughtfully.

"In precisely ten days," I told her.

I wandered about the colony till the approach of dark, beset by the most dismal reflections.

The ancient circular space, shut in by walls three hundred years old and several feet thick, with the clumsy, peeling church in the middle, every square metre of the

befouled earth, bristled with pedagogical problems, ubiquitous as weeds. In the decrepit stable, up to its eaves in dung, in the cowshed, which was an almshouse for about a dozen spinsters of the bovine tribe, all over the farmyard, among the shattered railings of a long-demolished orchard, over the entire territory surrounding me, protruded the dry stalks of "social education." And in the dormitories of the colonists, the empty apartments of the staff, in the so-called clubs, in the kitchen and in the dining room heavy, poisonous fruits were swaying from these stalks, fruits which I would have to swallow in the course of the next few days.

My reflections were interspersed with rage. I began to recognize in myself the fury of the year 1920. Suddenly the seductive demon of unrestrained hatred was behind me again. I longed to seize somebody or other by the coat collar now, this very instant, without moving from the spot, to rub his nose in the malodorous heaps and puddles, to demand immediate action—not pedagogy, or social education theory, not revolutionary duty, or communist fervour, no, nothing but ordinary common sense, ordinary, despised, philistine honesty! Rage destroyed my fear of coming events, my fear of failure. My momentary fit of uncertainty had been radically cured by the promise I had given the girls. This score or so of frightened, hushed, pale girls, whom I had so recklessly guaranteed a human existence in ten days, had now become for me the representatives of my own conscience.

It gradually became quite dark. There was no light in the colony. Grim, prosaic dusk set in on the monastery walls, and encroached upon the church. Everywhere waifs came crawling out from corners and crevices, grabbing at some sort of a supper, and beginning to settle down for the night. There was no laughter, no singing, no cheerful talk. Every now and then a muffled grumble would make itself heard, or the sounds of lazy, evidently habitual, quarreling. Two drunken individuals, swearing monotonously, were trying to get on to a porch leading to a dormitory, but lacking steps. From the shadows Kostya Vetkovsky and Volokhov regarded them with silent contempt.

3

THE DAILY ROUND

The next day at two o'clock the director of Kuryazh condescended to sign the deed of transfer, including the discharging of the whole staff, got into a horse cab, and took his departure. Gazing after his disappearing head I envied this man his radiant success—he was as free as a bird, nobody had so much as chucked a stone after him.

I, who had no wings, must move heavily about amidst the earthly population of Kuryazh, with a sickening pain within me all the while.

Vanka Shelaputin was illumined by the May sunshine. He sparkled like a diamond, all shyness and smiles. The copper bell fixed to the wall of the church would have liked to sparkle beside him. But the bell was old and begrimed, and could only grimace dully in the sun. It was, moreover, cracked, and not all Vanka's efforts could get anything useful out of the bell. And Vanka wanted to ring the bell for a general meeting.

The disagreeable, burdensome, nagging sense of responsibility is in its very nature irrational. It fusses about every trifle, forces its way into the smallest crevice, and sits there trembling with rage and anxiety. While Shelaputin was ringing it fastened upon the bell: how could such jarring sounds be allowed to float over the colony?

Vitka Gorkovsky stood beside me earnestly studying my expression. Then he transferred his gaze to the belfry at the monastery gate, and the pupils of his eyes darkened and widened, until a round dozen of little imps seemed to be peeping out of them. Vitka laughed noiselessly, throwing back his head, flushed slightly, and said huskily:

"We'll organize that, we will!"

He sped to the belfry, holding a flying meeting with Volokhov en route. Vanya, who had twice forced the old bell to emit hoarse coughs, was exclaiming, laughing:

"Don't they understand? I keep ringing, ringing, and they take no notice!"

The club was housed in the old church. It had high windows with gratings in front of them, and two calorific stoves. There was a rickety little table on the rotting plat-

form in the semicircular altar space. The Chinese saying that it is better to sit than to stand was ignored in Kuryazh. There was nothing to sit on in the club. Anyhow, the Kuryazhites had no intention of sitting down. A matted head would occasionally peep in, and as quickly disappear; groups of threes and fours roved the yard pining for dinner, which, owing to the transitional period, would be late today. But these are mere plebeians—the moving spirits of Kuryazh civilization are somewhere under cover.

There are no teachers in sight. I know now what is wrong. We had not slept very well on the hard tables in the Pioneers' Room, and the boys had entertained me with fascinating stories about Kuryazh life.

The forty teachers had forty rooms in the colony. Eighteen months previously they had triumphantly filled these rooms with objects of culture, crochet tablecloths, and ottomans in the best provincial style. But they had other valuables of a more portable nature, and better suited to transference from one owner to another, and these valuables soon began to come into the possession of the Kuryazh colonists in the simplest manner possible—a procedure known from time immemorial under the name of burglary. This classical form of acquisition was so widely employed in Kuryazh that the teachers hastened one after another to carry off the surviving objects of culture to town, leaving only furnishings of the most modest kind in their rooms, if indeed a copy of *Izvestia* spread on the floor and affording the pedagogues a resting place during their time on duty can be described as furnishings.

But since the Kuryazh teachers had learned to tremble for their lives and for the integrity of their persons no less than for their property, the forty teachers' rooms had acquired, in a very short space of time, the nature of casemates in time of war, within the walls of which the teaching staff honourably passed their hours on duty. Never before or since have I seen such powerful defensive adjustments as those affixed to windows, doors, and other outlets in the rooms of the Kuryazh teachers. The frames of doors and windows were festooned with huge hooks, thick iron bolts, metal bars, and padlocks of enormous weight.

From the moment of the arrival of the Advance Mixed I never saw a teacher. Their discharge was thus in the nature of a symbolic act; I even thought of their apartments as abstract conventions, for only empty vodka bottles and bugs remained to prove that human beings had ever lived in these apartments.

A person of indefinite appearance and age, named Lozhkin, did, it is true, cross my line of vision. He made an effort to demonstrate to me his pedagogical powers, and to remain in the Gorky Colony, "in order under your guidance to lead youth further along the path to progress." He hovered around me for half an hour, chattering about various pedagogical subtleties.

"Chaos! Simply chaos! You can ring and ring, but they won't come. And why won't they? A pedagogical approach is required, that's what I always say. It's quite true what is said—conditioned behaviour is required, and how can there be conditioned behaviour if a boy (excuse me!) steals and nobody prevents him from stealing? I have the right approach to them, and they always come to me, they respect me, and yet. . . . I was two days at my mother-in-law's, she was ill, and what d'you think?—they took the glass out of my window, and stole absolutely everything. They left me as naked as a newborn babe, with nothing but the coat on my back. And why, you may ask? All right—steal from a person who isn't kind to you, but why steal from one who's always been kind to you? A pedagogical approach is required, that's what I always say. I call the lads to me, to have a talk with them, every now and then, you know. I get their interest, and that's what's wanted. I set them a problem. There are seven kopeks more in one pocket than in the other, and altogether there are twenty-three kopeks, how many kopeks are there in each pocket? Ingenious, don't you think?"

Lozhkin cocked his eye at me roguishly.

"Well?" I said, trying to be polite.

"No, no, you tell me—how many?"

"How many what?"

"Tell me how many there were in each pocket."

"You want me to tell you?"

"Yes—tell me how many were there in each pocket."

"Listen to me, Comrade Lozhkin," I said indignantly. "Have you ever been to school?"

"Of course I have. But I got most of my learning by self-education. My life has been one long self-education, and of course I never got into one of those pedagogical technicums or institutes. And I tell you—there were some people here with university education, one of them even graduated from shorthand courses, and another, he was a lawyer, and just you try and set them a problem like this one. Or this, for instance: two brothers inherited a fortune. . . ."

"Was it the stenographer who wrote that on the wall?"

"It was him. . . . He kept wanting to form a shorthand circle, but after they robbed him, he said: 'I will not work amidst such barbarism,' and didn't organize any circle, but only carried out preliminary educational work."

There was a piece of cardboard hanging by the stove in the club, bearing the inscription:

STENOGRAPHY IS THE PATH TO SOCIALISM

Lozhkin went on chattering for a long time, and then seemed to vanish into thin air, and all I remember of him is that Volokhov said through his teeth by way of parting words:

"Damned bore!"

In the club we had to face the crushing and disagreeable fact that the Kuryazhites did not intend to come to the meeting. Volokhov looked dolefully at the high bare walls of the clubroom. Kudlaty, livid with rage, his jaw set, was whispering something to himself. Mitka was smiling scornfully, Misha Ovcharenko, who alone was calm and good-humoured, proceeded to develop an argument started by him long before.

"The great thing is to plough . . . and to sow. Fancy, already May, and the horses eating their heads off, just standing doing nothing!"

"And there's nobody in the dormitories," said Volokhov. "They've all gone to town."

And he began to swear roundly, speaking very distinctly, no whit embarrassed by my presence.

"Don't let's give them any dinner till they come," proposed Kudlaty.

"No," said I.

"No?" yelled Kudlaty. "And what are we doing here? The fields are covered with weeds, not even ploughed, what d'you call that? And they calmly eat their dinners. So lazy bums can do as they like, can they?"

Volokhov moistened his dry, angry lips, hunched his shoulders as if in a fit of shivering, and said:

"Anton Semyonovich, come to us, we must talk."

"And what about dinner?"

"Let them wait, confound them! Besides, they've gone to town."

In the Pioneers' Room, when everyone had seated themselves on the benches, Volokhov held forth as follows:

"Is the land to be ploughed? And sown? And what the hell are we to sow, when they haven't got a thing, not even potatoes? To hell with them, we'd sow ourselves, but there isn't anything. And look what filth and stink everywhere. We shan't know how to look our chaps in the face when they come—there's nowhere for a decent person to put his foot down! And dormitories, mattresses, beds, pillows? And clothes? They all go barefoot, and where are their underclothes? And there are no dishes, no spoons, no anything! What shall we begin on? We've got to begin on something!"

The lads looked at me with eager expectation, as if they felt I was bound to know what to begin on.

It was not so much the Kuryazh boys who worried me, as innumerable details of a purely material nature, which mounted up to a complex and tangled jumble in which the three hundred Kuryazhites might become hopelessly lost sight of.

Under the agreement with the Children's Aid Committee I was to receive the sum of twenty thousand rubles for getting Kuryazh into order, but it had already become obvious that this sum was a mere drop in the ocean in comparison with what was required. My boys had not exaggerated in drawing up their list of requirements. But the utter destitution of Kuryazh only really came to light when Kudlaty began to take over the property. The director need not have worried as to the unworthiness of the signatures to the deed of transfer. The

director had a front of brass, and the deed was extremely brief. There were a few lathes in the workshops, and a few nondescript nags in the stables, and that was all—no tools, no materials, no agricultural inventory. Half a dozen pigs were grunting in the trampled, liquid dung of the wretched pigsty. When the boys saw them they could not restrain their laughter, so little did these animals, with their heavy heads, spindly legs and tiny tails, resemble our Englishers. Kudlaty extricated a plough from some remote corner of the yard, and rejoiced over it as if it had been a long-lost brother. And a harrow was discovered among a heap of old bricks. All that could be found in the school were a few legs from tables and chairs, and the remains of blackboards—a perfectly natural phenomenon, since the winter season does come to an end every year, and any householder may find himself in the spring with some slight reserves of firewood on his hands.

Everything had to be bought, made, rebuilt. The very first act would have to be the putting up of toilets. Toilets are never mentioned in pedagogical handbooks, and no doubt this was the reason why that vital institution had been so airily neglected in Kuryazh. The Kuryazh monastery was built on a hill, falling sharply downwards in all directions. The southern slope alone was not walled in, and from its vantage could be seen, across the marshy monastery pond, the thatched roofs of the village of Podvorky. The view was a nice Ukrainian view in all respects, capable of inspiring a poet with any amount of appropriate rhymes. And in return for this beautiful view the Kuryazhites had the base ingratitude to present the dwellers of Podvorky with nothing but rows of figures squatting over the edge of the slope, busy converting into their final stage the products purchased with the social-educational millions.

My boys suffered greatly in respect to the problem just touched upon. Misha Ovcharenko, treating the subject with the utmost gravity and sincerity, complained:

“Now, really! What *are* we to do? Go to Kharkov, or what? And how are we to get there?”

And so by the end of our conference two carpenters from Podvorky were standing in the doorway of the Pioneers' Room, the older of which, a soldierly-looking

individual in a khaki cap, eagerly supported my intentions.

"Of course! It's a disgrace! People have to eat, so they must.... And boards we can get from the Ryzhov depot. Don't you worry! Everybody here knows me. Just give me the money agreed on and we'll put you up a fine place—even the monks didn't have such a good one! Of course if you want it done cheap you can have plywood or thin boarding, and we can make a light shack, but if you want something better I would advise one-and-a-half or two-inch boards—it'll be healthier, you know—not so draughty, and it'll be sheltered in the winter, and the heat won't crack it in the summer."

It seemed to me that never before had I been so touched as I was by this splendid person, who built with a view to winter and summer, wind and shelter. His name was Borovoy. I gave him a wad of notes, and rejoiced a second time on hearing his lusty instructions to the rosy chubby lad who was his assistant.

"I'm going for wood, Vanya, and you can begin work. Run and get your spade, and bring mine, too. We might as well make a start. One of them will have to come with us and show us where they want it, and how they want it."

Kirghizov and Kudlaty went off, smiling, to show Vanya the "where and how," while Borovoy swaddled the money in a mysterious strip of cloth and once more proffered me his moral support.

"We'll do it, Comrade Director! Trust me!"

I did trust him. I felt better about everything. I had done with the unwieldy, moribund transitional stage, and could begin upon pedagogical work in Kuryazh.

The second problem satisfactorily solved by us that evening—that of spoons and plates—was also connected with everyday life. In the domed refectory, where grave-eyed saints and madonnas, their fingers raised in benediction, peered through layers of whitewash, were tables and benches, but neither spoons nor plates. The Kuryazhites had never possessed any. After half an hour's bustling about, and diplomatic representations in the stable, Volokhov got Evgenyev on to an old cart and sent him into town to purchase four hundred plates, and as many wooden spoons.

At the gate Evgenyev's cart found itself in the midst of a joyous, shouting, hugging crowd. Our lads, feeling instinctively the blowing of a familiar breeze rushed for the gate. I ran out too, and fell immediately into the clutches of Karabanov, who had recently become fond of demonstrating his strength at the expense of my chest.

It was the seventh mixed detachment (our *Rabfak* students), under the command of Zadorov, arriving in full force, and from that moment the problem of the mysteriously menacing crowd of Kuryazhites shrank to the dimensions of an infinitesimal task which Lozhkin himself would have thought nothing of.

It was a great pleasure, this of meeting all our *Rabfak* students at such a moment of difficulty and confusion. They were all there—the solid heavy Burun, Semyon Karabanov, on whose passionate temperament traces of learning were beginning to show in such delightful relief, Anton Bratchenko, whose broad nature had managed to confine itself within the narrow framework of veterinary science, Matvei Belukhin, serenely joyful, Osadchy, grave, steel-strong, Vershnev, intellectual and truth-seeker, Marusya Levchenko, black-eyed and intelligent, Nastya Nachevnaya, energetic as ever, Georgievsky, “the son of the Irkutsk governor,” Schneider, Krainik, Golos, and, last but not least, my favourite and “god-child,” Alexander Zadorov, the commander of the Seventh Mixed. The older members of the seventh mixed detachment were soon to graduate from the *Rabfak*, and we had not the slightest doubt that in the VUZ*, too, they would do well. We, however, regarded them more in the light of colonists, than students, and just now we had no time to go into the list of their scholastic triumphs. After the first greetings had subsided we returned to the Pioneers' Room, Karabanov went to the table, settled himself comfortably in his chair, and said:

“We understand, Anton Semyonovich—it's as clear as daylight. It's do or die! And so we have come.”

We told the *Rabfak* students about this our first day. They knitted their brows, looked round anxiously, scraped

* Higher Educational Establishment.—*Tr.*

their chairs against the floor. Zadorov, narrowing his eyes, looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"No, no! This can't be done by force. There are too many of them."

Burun shrugged his vast shoulders, and smiled.

"Not so many, Sasha, really! That's not the point! It's not that there are so many of them, but—confound it—there doesn't seem to be anything to take hold of. A lot of them, you say, but where are they? Where are they? Who is there to get hold of? We've got to get them in a bunch. And how are you going to set about it?"

Gulyaeva came in, listened to our talk, countered Karabanov's suspicious glance with a smile, and said:

"You'll never get them all together! Never!"

"Oh, won't we?" said Semyon, getting angry. "What d'you mean—'never'? We'll get them together. If not the whole two hundred and eighty, then *one* hundred and eighty will come. And then we'll see. What's the good of sitting here?"

A plan of action was drawn up. We would give them dinner. The Kuryazhites, now really hungry, were all in the dormitories, waiting for their dinner. Let them eat, confound them, and while they're eating all of us must go about the dormitories making propaganda. They must be told, the swine—come to the meeting—are you, or are you not human beings? Come! It's in your own interests, you beasts; a new life is beginning for you, and you scuttle away like cockroaches! And if anybody starts getting tough, you don't have to get excited. Just say—anyone can act tough sitting next to a pot of borshch—you come to the meeting, and tell us what you want. . . . That's all. After dinner we'll ring the bell for the meeting.

A score or so of the Kuryazhites were sitting about the kitchen door waiting for dinner to be served. Mishka Ovcharenko was standing in the doorway giving the red-haired youth who had asked me my name yesterday, a lesson in ethics:

"Anyone who doesn't work has no right to any food, and you try and tell me he has. You have no right to anything. D'you get that, old man? You ought to understand that perfectly if you've got a head on your should-

ers. I can give you something, but that'll be of my own good will, my lad! Because you haven't earned anything, you understand, pal! Everybody has got to work, and you, old man, you're just a drone, and you've got nothing coming to you! I can give you alms, that's all."

The red-haired youth was looking at Misha with the eye of an angry wild beast. The other eye saw nothing, indeed great changes had come over the countenance of the red-haired youth since the day before. Certain details of that countenance had become considerably enlarged, and acquired a bluish tint, and his upper lip and right cheek were smeared with blood. All this entitled me to put a very serious question to Misha Ovcharenko:

"What's the meaning of this? Who's been decorating his face?"

Misha smiled gravely, but seemed to question the correctness of the manner in which the inquiry was made.

"Why d'you ask *me*, Anton Semyonovich? It's not my mug, it belongs to Khovrakh. I stick to my business, and I am ready to give you, as our director, a detailed report on it. Volokhov said: 'stand at the door, and let there be no going into the kitchen!' I stood at the door, and that's what I'm doing now. Did I go after him, did I follow him to the dormitory, did I nag at him? Let Khovrakh tell you himself! They all come here without any business—perhaps he ran against something?"

Khovrakh who had suddenly begun whimpering, nodded towards Misha, and expounded his own point of view.

"All right! You think you have a right to starve us, and knock us about, do you? You don't know me, do you? Very well, you'll know me in time!"

At that time the status of the aggressor had not as yet been defined, and I had to think things over. Cases similarly obscure are known to history, and have always been settled with the greatest difficulty.

I cautiously adopted a middle course.

"What right had you to beat him up?"

Still smiling, Misha extended a Finnish knife towards me.

"Look here—it's a 'finka.' Where d'you think I got it? Perhaps you think I stole it from Khovrakh? There was

a lot of jawing. Volokhov said nobody's to go into the kitchen. I never moved from this spot, and he came at me with his 'finka,' and said: 'Let me in!' Of course, I didn't let him in, Anton Semyonovich, and he said again: 'Let me in!' and tried to push past me. So I gave him a shove. Just a nice little shove, and he, the fool, starts waving his 'finka' about. He doesn't know what discipline means. Just like a block...."

"Still, you did beat him up! Look—he's all over blood! Is that the work of your fists?"

Misha looked down at his fists in some confusion.

"Mine, of course, whose else could they be? But I never moved from the spot. Volokhov told me to stay here, and I did. And of course Khovrakh, the idiot, started waving his hands about."

"And you didn't?"

"Nobody forbade me to wave my hands, did they? So long as I stay at my post, I suppose I can shift my feet, or, supposing one of my hands is on the wrong side, can't I change it over? And if he ran against it—is it my fault? You ought to be careful where you go, Khovrakh! Supposing a train's coming. You can see there's a train coming, so step aside, and wait. And if you stand in the tracks, with your 'finka' out, of course the train can't move out of its way, and there'll be nothing left of you but a puddle. Or supposing a machine's working, you must be careful how you go near it—you're not a baby!"

Misha explained all this to Khovrakh in a good-humoured way, in a voice which was even affectionate, gesticulating in the most convincing manner with his right hand, to show how the train might come, and where Khovrakh ought to stand when it did. Khovrakh listened to him with silent attention, the blood on his cheeks congealing in the rays of the May sun. A group of our *Rab-fak* students was listening gravely to the speech of Misha Ovcharenko, recognizing the difficulty of Misha's position, and the simple wisdom of his arguments.

While we were talking, several Kuryazhites came up. I could read in their faces that they had been charmed by Misha's logic, rendered in their eyes the more convincing in that it came from a victor. I remarked with satisfac-

ers. I can give you something, but that'll be of my own good will, my lad! Because you haven't earned anything, you understand, pal! Everybody has got to work, and you, old man, you're just a drone, and you've got nothing coming to you! I can give you alms, that's all."

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He seemed in no hurry to obey my order, but kept fumbling as usual in his pockets, his eyes fixed on my boots. I let a steely note creep into my voice.

"Come nearer, I tell you!"

All around was silence, the only sound a scared: "Wow!" from Petya Malikov.

Khovrakh, his underlip protruding, moved towards me, endeavouring to intimidate me with his steady gaze. When he got within two paces he halted, his leg swinging, as he had done yesterday.

"Attention!" I shouted.

"Attention—what does that mean?" muttered Khovrakh, but he straightened up, and took his hands out of his pockets, placing, however, the right one provocatively on his hip, the fingers extended.

Karabanov removed this hand from the hip.

"Listen, child, when you're ordered to stand at attention, you don't dance the hopak. Keep your head up!"

Khovrakh frowned, but I could see he was shaping right.

"You're a Gorkyite now," I told him. "You must learn to respect your comrades. You won't bully the little ones any more, will you?"

Khovrakh blinked gravely, and indicated a smile with the merest flicker of his lower lip. There had been more threat than tenderness in my question, and I could see that Khovrakh had made a note of this fact. His reply was brief.

"All right!"

"Not all right, but 'very good,' confound you!" rang out Belukhin's powerful tenor.

Without the slightest ceremony Matvei swung Khovrakh round by the shoulders, smote him simultaneously on each drooping hand, one of which he deftly lifted in a salute, at the same time dropping out, word by word:

"Very good—no bullying the little ones! Now *you* say it!"

Khovrakh's mouth sagged.

"What are you jumping on me for, lads? What have I done, after all? I haven't done anything special. It was him that socked me in the jaw—that it was! I didn't do anything."

The Kuryazhites moved nearer, fascinated. Karabanov put his arm round Khovrakh's shoulders, and said warmly:

"Pal! You're a clever chap, old man! Misha's on duty, he's protecting the common interest, not his own. Come with me to the copse, and I'll explain."

They set off for the copse accompanied by a swarm of amateurs of ethical problems.

Volokhov gave the order for dinner to be served. The cook, his face adorned with a long moustache, and his head crowned by a white cap, had long been bobbing up and down behind Misha; he now gave Volokhov a friendly nod, and disappeared. Vanya Zaichenko, plucking violently at the sleeves of his "bunch," said in an urgent whisper:

"Look, he's put on his white cap! What d'you suppose that means, Timka? What do you make of it?"

Timka, flushing, lowered his eyes, and said:

"It's his own cap, I knew he had one."

A general meeting was held at five o'clock. Whether owing to the propaganda of the *Rabfak* students, or to some other cause, the Kuryazhites gathered in fairly considerable numbers in the club. And when, Volokhov having posted Misha Ovcharenko in the doorway, Osadchy and Shelaputin began to take down the names of those present, thus embarking upon that indispensable pedagogical process, the listing of subjects, latecomers pushed their way in, inquiring anxiously:

"Will the ones not written down get supper?"

The body of the former church could scarcely contain this mass of raw humanity.

From the altar steps I looked waifdom in the face, struck by its volume and appalling blankness. In very few places interesting, animated faces were conspicuous among the crowd, only occasionally a human word, a child's frank laugh, might be heard. The girls huddled together in terrified silence next to the stove at the back of the hall. Apathetic, primitive faces with gaping mouths, blurred eyes, flabby muscles, made round, lifeless patches in the dingy ocean of jackets, tousled heads and mouldy smells.

I gave them a brief account of the Gorky Colony, its life and work, describing the task we had set ourselves

—cleanliness, work, study, a new life, new human happiness. They were living in a happy country, where there were no landowners and capitalists, where a human being could grow up in freedom, and develop in joyful labour. I soon grew tired, missing the support of an attentive and responsive audience. It was like addressing so many wardrobes, barrels, and boxes. I announced that the colonists would have to organize in detachments, twenty to a detachment, and asked my audience to choose fourteen persons as commanders. They remained silent. I asked them to put questions, and still they remained silent. Kudlaty came to the altar step, and said:

“Look here, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! You gobble up bread and potatoes and borshch, and who is bound to provide you with all that? Who is bound to? Supposing I don’t give you dinner tomorrow! What then?”

To this question also no answer was forthcoming.

Kudlaty grew angry.

“Then I propose that everyone is to work six hours from tomorrow. There’s sowing to be done, confound you! Do you mean to work?”

A single voice came from a far corner.

“We’ll work!”

The whole crowd turned leisurely heads in the direction of the voice, and again the dull countenances came into line.

I glanced at Zadorov, and in reply to my glance he laughed, putting his hand on my shoulder.

“Never mind, Anton Semyonovich, it’ll pass!”

4

“ALL’S WELL!”

Our endeavours to organize the Kuryazhites were carried late into the night. The *Rabfak* students went about the dormitories, taking down once again the names of the colonists, with a view to forming detachments. I, too, roved about the dormitories, taking Gorkovsky with me by way of a gauge. It was essential to try and pin down, if only roughly, any first signs of a collective, to discover traces of some sort of potential social adhesive. Gorkovsky would sniff about the dark dormitory, calling out:

"Come on, now! What bunch is in here?"

As often as not there was neither bunch nor any individual in the dormitories. Heaven knows where they had got to, these Kuryazhites! We inquired of bystanders as to the inhabitants of the dormitories, who palled up with whom, who were bad lots here, who were decent fellows, but the replies gave us little satisfaction. Most of the Kuryazhites did not know their neighbours, even by name; at the best they could only give us nicknames—Ear, Boot-sole, Chauffeur—or recollected outward characteristics:

"A pock-marked chap sleeps in this bed, and a boy from Valky in that one."

We did find certain traces of social adhesive substance in some places, but what it had joined together was not what we were looking for.

By nightfall, however, I had achieved some idea of the nature of the Kuryazhites.

They were of course real waifs, but not exactly of the traditional sort. Somehow or other the waif has become identified in our literature, and in the minds of our intellectuals with the image of a kind of Byronic hero. The waif is supposed to be a philosopher and a wit, an anarchist and a destroyer, a hoodlum and the foe of all ethical systems whatsoever. Terrified and lachrymose pedagogues have added to this image an assortment of more or less garish feathers pulled out of the tails of sociology, reflexology, and the rest of our grand relatives. They firmly believed that the waifs were organized, that they had leaders and discipline, a regular strategy of thievish operations, and their own rules and regulations. They even honoured them with specific scientific terminology—"the spontaneously-arising collective," and all that sort of thing.

This picturesque image of the waif was still further beautified in the pious works of the ignoramuses—both Russian and foreign. All waifs were dubbed thieves, drunkards, rakes, drug addicts, and syphilitics. Only to Peter the Great, in the whole history of the world, have so many mortal sins ever before been attributed. And no doubt all this made it easier for the slandermongers of Western Europe to spread so many foolish and outrageous anecdotes about life in the Soviet Union.

In reality, the life of waifs and strays in the Soviet Union was not in the least like these anecdotes.

The theory of a permanent waif society, filling our streets with its ideology as well as with its appalling crimes and picturesque attire, must be resolutely discarded. The authors of the romantic stories about the Soviet anarchists of the gutter failed to note that, after the Civil War and famine, millions of children were kept alive in homes and colonies by the strenuous united efforts of the whole country. In the overwhelming majority of cases these children have long ago grown up and are working in Soviet factories and state institutions. How smoothly the pedagogical process worked in the bringing-up of these children is another matter.

It was largely owing to these same romantics that work in children's homes turned out so unsatisfactorily, resulting now and again in institutions of the Kuryazh type. And if boys (only boys are under consideration here) therefore frequently returned to the streets, it was by no means to live there permanently, or because they considered the streets their natural habitat. There never has been a specific "gutter ideology," and they only ran away in the hope of getting into some better colony or children's home. They haunted the thresholds of all manner of children's committees and commissions, but most of all they longed to get into places offering them a chance of taking part in our constructional work, while evading the blessings of pedagogical conditioning. But they did not often succeed in this. The pedagogical fraternity, stubborn and opinionated, was not going to let its prey slip so easily through its fingers, and could not, moreover, imagine a human life which had not gone through the grind of "social education." Truants were, therefore, usually forced to undergo all over again the pedagogical process in yet another colony, from which, of course, they could also run away. In the waiting period between one colony and another these youthful citizens of course spent their lives in the streets, and, having neither the leisure, the skill, nor the office desks required for the consideration of ideological and ethical questions, they naturally enough solved such problems as nutrition without the aid of morals or principles. In other spheres also, the actions of

the street-dwellers were none too closely correlated with formal principles of ethics—as a rule waifs are but little inclined to formalism. The waifs, not without certain conceptions of expediency, believed, in the depth of their hearts, that they were heading straight for the career of a metalworker or chauffeur, and that only two things were required for this—to keep alive as long as possible, even if this necessitated snatching ladies' handbags and gentlemen's brief-cases—and to get as near as they could to some garage or mechanized workshop.

Several efforts have been made in learned works to draw up a satisfactory system for the classification of human characteristics, and the greatest pains taken to allot an "amoral" and "defective" place for the waifs. Of all these classifications I consider the best was that drawn up for practical application by the Kharkov Dzerzhinsky Commune.

According to the working hypothesis of the commune, waifs were divided into three grades. One: those who took an active part in drawing up their own horoscopes, and shrank neither from trouble nor danger; those who, in the pursuit of a metalworker's career were ready to attach themselves to any part of a railway carriage, without, of course, laying any claims to the inside, being quite exceptional in their taste for the whirlwind of express trains, and in their immunity to the attractions of dining cars, sleeping accommodation, and service. Some people slandered these travellers by declaring that they haunted the railways in the pursuit of Crimean air, or the mineral waters of Sochi. This is not true. It was mainly the Dniepropetrovsk, Donetsk, and Zaporozhye giant factories, the Odessa and Nikolayev steamers, and the Kharkov and Moscow industrial works which fascinated them.

The second grade of waifs, while possessing many virtues, could not lay claim to such a combination of generous moral qualities as distinguished the first. These, too, were seekers, but, far from turning away in disgust from textile mills and leather works, they reconciled themselves to carpentry shops, or actually went in for paperboard making—and there were some who sank so low as to gather medicinal herbs.

The second grade also travelled, but preferably on the back buffers of trams, and had no idea of the splendid station at Zhmerinka, or the strict regulations in Moscow.

The Dzerzhinsky communards always preferred getting citizens of the first grade into their commune. They therefore recruited their ranks chiefly by means of propaganda on express trains. The commune regarded the second grade as infinitely inferior.

But in Kuryazh it was not the first, nor even the second grade which predominated, but the third. Among street waifs, as among the learned, there were not many of the first grade, and only a few more of the second—the overwhelming majority belonged to the third grade. The members of this overwhelming majority neither ran away, nor sought anything, but in all simplicity submitted the tender petals of their childish souls to the organizing influence of “social education.”

In Kuryazh I struck a rich vein of the third grade. In their brief histories these children had been in two or three children's homes or colonies, some in as many as eleven, but this was the result, not of their aspirations towards a better future, but of the creative aspirations of workers in the Department of Public Education, aspirations often so vague that even a trained eye would find it hard to define the borderlines dividing reorganization, amalgamation, parcellization, replenishment, curtailment, development, liquidation, reconstruction, expansion, typification, standardization, evacuation and re-evacuation.

And since I, too, had come to Kuryazh with reorganizing intentions, I was bound to be met with that indifference which is the sole protective attitude of every waif in the face of the pedagogical reshuffling of the cards practised by the Department of Public Education.

Stolid indifference, the inevitable product of a protracted educational process, to a certain extent demonstrated the vast might of pedagogics.

Most of the Kuryazhites were aged between thirteen and fifteen, but various signs of atavism seemed to be already imprinted upon their visages. The first thing that would strike a newcomer was the complete absence of the faintest social consciousness, despite the fact that they had grown up almost from birth under the banner of “so-

cial education." A kind of primitive, vegetative spontaneity marked their every movement, but it was not the spontaneity of a child, responding artlessly to every phenomenon of life. They did not know what life was, their horizons being limited by lists of food products, to which they were drawn by a drowsy, sullen reflex. The problem of their lives consisted in pushing their way through a crowd of wild beasts like themselves towards the soup cauldron. Sometimes it was solved with greater, sometimes with less success. The pendulum of their personal lives knew no other vacillations. The Kuryazhites only stole objects which they could lay their hands on without effort, or upon which the crowd fell instinctively. The will of these children had been crushed by the bullying and swearing of the senior boys, who had blossomed on the soil of "social education," "non-interference," and "self-discipline."

At the same time these children were by no means imbeciles, they were simply ordinary children placed by fate in the most absurd situation—deprived of the blessings of human development, and at the same time removed from the bracing influence of the mere struggle for existence by being given daily, if unpalatable nourishment.

Against this background were conspicuous certain groups of a different nature. The dormitory in which Khovrakh lived was evidently the headquarters of the seniors. My boys told me that there were fifteen of them, and that their ringleader was a certain Korotkov. I had not seen him as yet, for the Kuryazhites spent most of their time in town. Evgenyev, who had found old acquaintances among them, told me they were ordinary city thieves, and all they needed of the colony was a place to sleep. Vitya Gorkovsky did not agree with Evgenyev.

"Call them thieves? They're just hoodlums!"

Vitka said that Korotkov, Khovrakh, Perets, Churilo, Podnebesny and the rest, did most of their business in the colony itself. First they cleaned out the teachers' apartments, the workshops and the storerooms. There had even been something to steal from the other colonists, many of whom had had new boots issued to them for the First of May; and according to Gorkovsky these boots were the main object of plunder. In addition to this they

stole in the village, and some of them even worked the highroad. The colony was situated on the Akhtyrka highroad.

Suddenly Vitka, narrowing his eyes, and laughing, said: "And what d'you think they've been up to now, the swine? The younger ones are afraid of them, they simply tremble before them. And so they've become organizers, think of that! They call the little ones their 'pups.' Each of them has several 'pups.' In the morning they say to them—'go where you like, but bring me this or that in the evening.' Some of them steal—in trains or at the market, but most of them don't know how to steal, they just beg. They stand in the street, at the bridge, and in Ryzhov. They say they get two or three rubles a day. Churilo's 'pups' are the best—they bring in as much as five rubles. And they have their norms—three quarters to the boss, one quarter to the 'pups.' You mustn't judge by there not being anything in the dormitories! They have suits, and money, but it's all hidden away. There are any amount of dens in Podvorky where they can find fences. They spend all their evenings there."

The second group contained boys like Zaichenko and Malikov. On a closer acquaintance with the colony it appeared that there were quite a few of them, about thirty. By some miracle they had managed to retain, despite the trials of life, their shining eyes, their delightful boyish aggressiveness, and the pristine analytical talents which enabled them to regard all manifestations of life with a true fighter's zest. I am very fond of this section of humanity. I like it for its beauty and the nobility of its spiritual impulses, for its profound feeling of honour, I even like it for being composed exclusively of convinced bachelors and woman haters. At the approach of my advance detachment these lads raised their heads, inhaling the fresh streams of air with dilated nostrils, and rushed for the dormitories, the above-mentioned analytical talents coming into rapid action. They were still afraid of going over to my side openly, but their support was, for all that, a certainty.

Vitka and I stumbled accidentally upon the third group of social elements, and Vitka "pointed" like a setter scenting a hare. In a far corner of the yard there stood,

propped against the wooden wall, a solitary annex with a carved wooden verandah. Vanya Zaichenko, pointing out this structure, said:

"The agronomists live there."

"Agronomists? How many of them are there?"

"Fourteen."

"Fourteen agronomists? Why so many?"

"They sowed rye, and now they live there."

I remembered Khalabuda, and my misgivings were deepened.

"That's just your name for them, I suppose!"

But Vanya looked very serious, and nodded still more emphatically towards the annex.

"No, they're real agronomists, you see if they're not! They ploughed, and they sowed rye. And look—it's coming up! Look how tall it is!"

Vitka gazed at Zaichenko indignantly.

"Those chaps in blue shirts! Aren't they just colonists? Stop that nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense!" said Vanka shrilly. "It isn't! They're waiting for certificates. As soon as they get certificates they will go."

"All right, then, let's go and see your agronomists!"

There were two bedrooms in the annex. On the beds, which were covered with comparatively clean blankets, sat youths, in blue shirts, as Vanya had said, with well-groomed hair, and extremely virtuous expressions. Neatly stuck on to the walls were picture postcards, and pictures cut out of magazines, and there were little mirrors in wooden frames. From the window-sills waved the scalloped edges of clean paper.

The solemn youngsters responded somewhat coldly to my greetings, evincing not the slightest embarrassment at Vanya's spirited introduction:

"Look, they're all agronomists, like I told you! And that's the head one—Voskoboinikov."

Vitka Gorkovsky looked at me as if we had been invited to make the acquaintance not of agronomists, but of wood sprites or water elves, in the existence of which Vitka was quite unable to believe.

"No offence meant, boys," I said, "but do tell me why they call you agronomists!"

Voskoboinikov, a tall youth, whose face was remarkable for extreme pallor and an expression of self-importance, neither of which qualities sufficed to conceal its fixed obtuseness, rose from his bed, thrust his hands into his narrow trouser pockets with an effort, and said:

"We are agronomists. We'll soon get our certificates."

"Who'll give you certificates?"

"Who? The director will!"

"What director?"

"The old director."

Vitka burst out laughing.

"Perhaps he'll give *me* one!"

"There's nothing to sneer at," said Voskoboinikov. "Don't talk of things you know nothing about. What do you know about it?"

Vitka lost his temper.

"I know you're all oafs. Tell us in detail, who is it that's playing the fool here?"

"Perhaps it's you who are playing the fool," retorted Voskoboinikov wittily, but Vitka could no longer endure this humbug.

"That'll do! Come on, tell us!"

We seated ourselves on beds. The agronomists, resentful and rude, interspersing their sparse narrative with wry, mistrustful grimaces, conquered their self-assurance and complacency sufficiently to reveal the secrets of Khalabuda's rye, and their own breath-taking careers. The previous autumn Khalabuda had sent a representative to Kuryazh on a special mission to sow rye. He had persuaded fifteen of the older boys to work for him, and paid them generously, housing them in a separate annex, buying them beds, linen, blankets, suits, coats, and giving them each fifty rubles, while promising to furnish them with agronomical certificates when the work was over. Inasmuch as all the conditions had been fulfilled, the beds and other comforts being incontestable realities, the boys had no reason to doubt the reality of the certificates, the more that they were all almost illiterate, none of them having gone further than the second class of an elementary school. The issue of diplomas had been postponed to the spring. This circumstance, however, did not trouble the boys much, for although Khalabuda's rep-

representative had vanished into the rarefied atmosphere of some Children's Aid Combine, the director of the colony had generously taken on the obligation. The day before he left he had told them that the diplomas were quite ready, and only had to be sent to Kuryazh, and solemnly bestowed upon the agronomists.

"Why, lads, you've simply been fooled!" I told them. "You'd have to study a lot, study several years, before you could be agronomists. There are colleges and technical schools, and to get into one of them you'd have to study in an ordinary school several years. And you—what's seven times eight?"

A dark, comely boy, at whom I had fired this question, replied somewhat diffidently:

"Forty-eight."

Vanya Zaichenko gasped, and opened his honest little eyes wide.

"Phew! Agronomists! Forty-eight! That's a good one! I say!"

"Who asked you to interfere? What's it to do with you?" shouted Voskoboinikov at Vanya.

"But it's fifty-six!" Vanya fairly paled with the intensity of his conviction. "Fifty-six!"

"Well, what about it?" said a broad-shouldered, angular youth, whom everyone called Svatko. "We've been promised places in a sovkhos—and now how will it be?"

"That could be arranged," I said, "it's a good thing to work on a state farm, but you'd be workers, not agronomists."

The agronomists bounced on their beds in the violence of their indignation. Svatko turned pale with rage.

"D'you suppose we can't find justice? We understand! We understand everything! The director warned us, he did! You want the land ploughed and nobody wants to do it. That's why you're making all this fuss! And you've talked over Khalabuda! But you won't get your own way, and that's all!"

Voskoboinikov once more thrust his hands into his pockets, and stretched his great height almost to the ceiling.

"Have you come here to cheat us? We were told about it by people who know. We've sown a lot of land, and

worked hard. And you want to exploit us. Nothing doing!"

"The fools!" uttered Vitka calmly.

"I'll give him one in the mug! Gorkyites! Coming here to use other peoples as catpaws!"

I rose from the bed. The agronomists turned their angry, dull faces upon us. I tried to take leave of them as calmly as possible.

"Just as you like, boys. If you want to be agronomists, that's fine. We don't need your work just now, we'll manage without you."

We turned to go. But Vitka could not contain himself, and spluttered out stubbornly on the very threshold:

"Anyhow you're idiots! Idiots!"

This remark evoked such indignation among the agronomists, that Vitka had to leave the porch at full speed.

In the Pioneers' Room, Zhorka Volkov was holding a review of the Kuryazhites who had, by fair means or foul, been appointed commanders. I had told Zhorka, beforehand, that nothing would come of it, that we did not want such commanders. But Zhorka had to prove the truth of this by experience.

The candidates were sitting on benches, rubbing their bare legs against one another like so many flies. Zhorka resembled a tiger just now, his keen eyes scattering sparks. The candidates behaved as if they thought they had been brought there to take part in a new game, with intricate rules, and considered the old game much better. They attempted to smile politely in reply to Zhorka's passionate explanations, but this effect of his oratory gave Zhorka little pleasure.

"What are you grinning at? What are you grinning at? Do you understand? You have lived the lives of parasites long enough! Do you know what the Soviet government is?"

The commanders, sheepishly quelling the lingering smiles on their cheeks, fell stern.

"I'm explaining to you—since you're the commander, your orders must be carried out."

"And supposing they won't obey?" asked a fair heavy-browed lad, breaking out into an irrepressible smile. His

name was Petrushko, and I could see at once that he was a shirker and a good-for-nothing.

Among those invited was Spiridon Khovrakh. His recent chat with Belukhin and Karabanov seemed to have softened him, but now he was disappointed—he was expected to get mixed up in disagreeable and unprofitable complications with his comrades.

That very evening, after Zhorka's passionate orations and the smiling indifference of the Kuryazhites, we nevertheless formed a Commanders' Council, wrote down the names of all the inhabitants of the colony, and even issued orders for the morrow's work. Volokhov and Kudlaty prepared the equipment for work in the fields the next day. Both Commanders' Council and equipment had a sorry appearance, and we went to bed conscious of fatigue and failure. Although Borovoy and his assistant had started on their work, and wood-shavings were already shining around intensely black heaps of earth, the general problem of Kuryazh was still obscure—there seemed to be nothing one could get hold of to make a proper start.

Early the next morning, the *Rabfak* students returned to Kharkov. As agreed upon in the Commanders' Council the reveille was sounded at six o'clock. Despite the fact that a new bell with a melodious tone was now hanging against the church wall, the signal produced not the slightest impression upon the Kuryazhites. The colony monitor, Ivan Denisovich Kirghizov, in a new red armband, peeped into some of the dormitories, but brought away nothing but low spirits. The colony was asleep. The only signs of life were in the stable, where the members of our advance detachment were busying themselves over preparations for going into the fields. Twenty minutes later it set out with three two-horse ploughs and harrows. Kudlaty took the farm cart into town to get seed potatoes. He was met by pallid, dampish forms coming from the town. I had not the strength to stop, search them, and speak to them about the events of the past night. They crept unhampered into the dormitories, and in this way the number of sleepers was actually increased.

According to the order drawn up the evening before, and unanimously confirmed by the Commanders' Council, it was proposed to set everyone in the colony cleaning

dormitories and the yard, clearing a space for hotbeds, digging vegetable plots around the monastery walls, and taking down the wall itself. In moments of optimism I began to experience a pleasing sense of power. Four hundred colonists! Archimedes would have been tickled to death to have four hundred colonists at his disposal! He might even have decided that the search for a fulcrum to overturn the world was now completed. Even the two hundred and eighty Kuryazhites represented for me an unusual concentration of energy after the hundred and twenty Gorkyites.

But this concentration of energy was sprawling in frowsy beds and seemed in no hurry to get up for breakfast. We already had plates and spoons, all of which had been laid in comparative order on the refectory tables. Shelaputin rang his bell for a whole hour before the first figures appeared in the refectory. Breakfast dragged on until ten o'clock. I made several speeches in the dining room, repeating for the tenth time who belonged to which detachment, who were the commanders in each detachment, and what was the work allotted to each. The colonists listened to my speeches without raising their heads from their plates. The little blackguards did not even seem to have noticed that an extremely rich and tasty soup had been made for them, and that a slab of butter had been placed on each piece of bread. They listlessly swallowed the soup and the butter, stuffed bits of bread into their pockets, and crawled out of the dining room, licking their grimy fingers and ignoring my glances, so full of Archimedean hope.

Nobody came near Misha Ovcharenko, who was standing on the church steps. Beside Misha on the church steps were laid out new spades, rakes and brooms—yesterday's purchases. In Misha's hands was a new writing pad, also purchased yesterday. On this pad Misha was to have entered the numbers of implements issued to each detachment. He looked extremely foolish surrounded by his wares, for not a single person came to him. Even Vanya Zaichenko, commander of the tenth detachment, which was composed of his friends—Vanya Zaichenko, on whom I had laid special hopes!—did not come for his implements, and I had not noticed him at breakfast. Of the

new commanders who were in the dining room, only Khovrakh came and stood beside me, insolently regarding the crowd passing by us. His detachment—the fourth—was to have started on the breaking up of the monastery wall, and Misha had got crowbars ready for him. But Khovrakh did not so much as hint at the work entrusted to him. Bland as ever, he spoke to me of things having nothing to do with the monastery wall.

“Is it true the girls in the Gorky Colony are pretty?”

I turned away from him, and went to the entrance, but he kept up with me, and continued, glancing into my face:

“They say some of your women teachers are hot stuff, too! Won’t it be fun when they come! There used to be some women here who weren’t bad, too. But what d’you think—they were terrified of my eye! I only had to look at them and they blushed. And why, I ask you, why are my looks so dangerous, you tell me!”

“Why hasn’t your detachment gone to work?”

“I’m damned if I know—what the hell is it to do with me? I didn’t go myself.”

“Why not?”

“Don’t feel inclined—ha-ha!”

He narrowed his eyes at the cross over the church.

“Here in Podvorky there’s some likely wenches, too. Ha-ha! I could introduce you if you like.”

Ever since the evening before I had been suppressing my rage by exercising almost superhuman efforts. And now something began to swell up insistently within me; but so far I could only hear a muffled creak from the region of my heart, as if the valves were warming themselves up. In my brain someone gave the command “Attention!” and feelings, thoughts, and the merest wisps of cerebration, hastened to straighten the slackening lines. That same “someone” ordered sternly:

“Leave Khovrakh alone! Find out immediately why Vanya Zaichenko’s detachment didn’t go to work, and why Vanya didn’t come to breakfast.”

And for these and other reasons I said to Khovrakh:

“Get the hell out of here! You...”

Profoundly astonished at my manner Khovrakh rapidly departed. I hastened to Zaichenko’s dormitory. Vanya

was lying on a bare mattress, surrounded by his bunch. He had his hand under his head, and his pale, thin hand against the dirty pillow looked very clean.

"What's happened?" I asked.

The bunch silently made way for me. Odaryuk made an effort to smile, and said almost inaudibly:

"They beat him up."

"Who did?"

From the pillow Vanya's voice was unexpectedly resonant.

"Somebody beat me up, you know! Just fancy! They came in the night, covered me with a blanket, and beat me within an inch of my life. I have a pain in my chest."

Vanya Zaichenko's ringing voice was in sharp contrast with his thin, pallid face.

I knew there was an annex at Kuryazh known as the hospital. There, among the dirty empty rooms, was one in which an old feldsher woman lived. I sent Malikov for her. Malikov knocked against Shelaputin in the doorway.

"Anton Semyonovich, they've come in a car, they're looking for you!"

Standing by a big black Fiat were Bregel, Comrade Zoya, and Klyamer. Bregel smiled majestically.

"Well, have you taken over?"

"I have."

"How's everything?"

"All right."

"Quite all right?"

"Well—fair to middling!"

Comrade Zoya looked at me distrustfully. Klyamer looked all round him. No doubt he was anxious to catch a glimpse of my hundred-ruble teachers. The feldsher hastened past us, with her stumbling old woman's gait, to Vanya Zaichenko. From the stable came Volokhov's indignant utterances:

"Swine! You've spoiled human beings, and you've spoiled horses! Not a single pair can work, you swine, you! These aren't horses, they're old harlots!"

Comrade Zoya blushed, gave a little jump, and shook her big, top-heavy head.

"That's what I call social education!"

I burst out laughing.

"That's not social education. It's just a person who can't find words to express his feelings!"

"Can't he?" said Klyamer, smiling venomously. "I should say that's just what he can do."

"Why, yes! At first he couldn't, and then he found them."

Bregel seemed to be going to speak, gazed steadily at me, and said nothing.

5

IDYLL

The next day I sent Koval the following telegram: "Gorky Colony Koval speed up departure colony entire teaching staff to arrive Kuryazh by first train."

On the evening of the day after I received a reply "Delay owing to trucks teachers leaving today."

The only cart in Kuryazh brought Ekaterina Grigoryevna, Lydia Petrovna, Butsai, Zhurbin, and Gorovich, from the station of Ryzhov at two a.m. We found rooms for them among the innumerable bastions inhabited by the former staff, and put up beds of some sort—mattresses we had had to buy in the town.

The meeting was joyful. Shelaputin and Toska, despite their fifteen years, showed their delight by embracing and kissing like schoolgirls, squealing joyfully, and hanging on each other's necks, their feet dangling. The Gorkytes arrived fresh and cheery, and I could read the report on the state of affairs in the colony on their faces. Ekaterina Grigoryevna confirmed it briefly:

"Everything's ready there. Everything's packed. They're only waiting for trucks."

"How are the boys?"

"The boys are sleeping on crates, and dying of impatience. I consider our boys happy people. We're all happy people, aren't we? How's yourself?"

"I am also too happy for words," I replied soberly. "But I don't think there are any other happy folk in Kuryazh."

"Why, what's happened?" asked Lydochka anxiously.

"Nothing terrible," said Volokhov scornfully. "There aren't enough of us, that's all. And there's work in the

fields to be done. We're the first mixed, and the second mixed, and anything else you like to name, now."

"And what about the Kuryazhites?"

The boys laughed.

"Wait till you see...."

Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich compressed his lips, glanced towards the boys, the dark windows, and myself.

"The boys are urgently needed?"

"They are," I said. "Very urgently. The colony must come to the rescue as quick as it can. Otherwise we shall collapse."

Pyotr Ivanovich cleared his throat.

"What's to be done? You'll have to go to the colony, though it'll be hard for us here. The railway people are asking a lot for trucks, they won't give any discount, and altogether they're being obstructive. You'll have to go there for a day. Koval has quarrelled with the railway authorities."

We fell silent. Volokhov moved his shoulders with a revolving motion, clearing his throat and hawking like an old man.

"That'll be all right," he said. "You go as soon as possible, we'll manage somehow or other. It can't be worse, anyhow—only tell our chaps not to dawdle."

Ivan Denisovich, seated on the window-sill, grinned imperturbably and peered at the hands of his watch.

"There'll be a train in two hours. What's your last will and testament?"

"My will? What's the good of a will? Of course you mustn't resort to force. There are six of you now. If you manage to get two or three detachments over to our side, it'll be fine. But try to get hold of them in detachments, not individually."

"That means propaganda, I suppose," said Gorovich dolefully.

"Propaganda, but don't make it too obvious. Tell them what you can about the colony, about individual cases, about construction work. But I don't have to teach you. Of course you won't be able to open their eyes all at once, but you can give them something to sniff at."

My brains were in a whirl. All sorts of ideas and images leaped, writhed, crawled, and even seemed to be

swooning in my head, and if one of them happened to strike an optimistic note, I at once began to have my suspicions that it was a tipsy one.

Pedagogics has its mechanics, its physics, its chemistry, its geometry, and there is even such a thing as pedagogical metaphysics. It might be asked how I could have left those six missionaries alone in Kuryazh, in the dark night. I had talked to them about propaganda, but what I really counted on was the sudden appearance in Kuryazh of six cultured, serious, well-meaning people. Surely this was like counting on a spoonful of honey in a barrel of tar! But was it really tar? My chemistry, of course, was far from brilliant. Any chemical reaction obtained could only be abjectly languid and inconclusive. If chemistry were needed here, then it must be of a different sort—the chemistry of dynamite, of nitroglycerine, some sudden, terrifying, impressive explosion, to send church walls, frowsy jackets, “child psychology,” hoodlums, and “certified agronomists” sky-high.

I was secretly ready to pack myself and my advanced mixed detachment neatly into a barrel—we certainly had enough explosive force between us. I recalled the year 1920. We had begun violently enough, there had been no lack of explosions. I myself had floated among the clouds, like Gogol’s Vakula, and I had feared nothing then. But now my head was adorned with all sorts of ribbons, such as, it seems, are essential for the most sanctimonious of all hypocrisies—pedagogics. “Granny dear, do let me have just one teeny little explosion!” “Certainly,” she replies, “only see you don’t hurt the boys’ feelings.”

No hope of explosions here!

“Volokhov—harness the horses! I’m off!”

An hour later I was standing at the open window of the railway carriage, looking at the stars. The train was a third-rate one, and there was nothing to sit on.

Had I not run away shamefully from Kuryazh, had I not recoiled in fear from my own dynamite reserves? I had to calm myself. Dynamite is a dangerous thing, why should I play with it, when I had in reserve my splendid Gorkytes? In four hours I should leave behind the stuffy, dirty, unfriendly railway carriage, and be among the “elect.”

I arrived at the colony in a horse cab, when the very sun seemed to be gasping for heat. Colonists came running up to me from every direction. Colonists, did I say? They were like emanations of radium! Even Galatenko, who had formerly refused to recognize running as a means of transport, looked out of the smithy, and suddenly began stumping along the path, making the earth tremble, like one of the elephants in the army of King Darius. He, too, contributed his note to the hubbub of greetings, astonishment, and impatient questions.

"How are things there, Anton Semyonovich—all right?"

Where did you get that brave, candid smile, Galatenko? Where did you get that fine muscle, wrinkling up your lower eyelid so graciously? What have you used on your eyes to make them shine so? Some magic lotion, or just pure spring water? And though the heavy tongue still moves with difficulty, it has found out how to express emotion. Yes—emotion!

"Why are you all so fine?" I asked. "Is there a ball on?"

"Ha!" replied Lapot. "A real ball! This is the first day we're not working, and in the evening we're giving *The Flea*—our farewell performance for the muzhiks. But tell us how things are over there."

The colonists, in new shorts, and new velvet skullcaps, specially bought to impress the Kuryazhites, fairly oozed holiday spirits. Members of the sixth (actors') detachment were rushing about the colony making preparations for the performance. Bedrooms, the school, the workshops, the club rooms, were crammed with nailed-down crates, bales sewed up in sacking, mattresses, bundles. The whole place had been swept and garnished as for a holiday. The eleventh detachment, under the leadership of Shura Zhevely, was ensconced in my room. My mother, too, was sitting amidst her trunks, but the boys had generously left her a collapsible bed, and Shura was very proud of this generosity.

"Granny can't do like we do. Have you seen? All the boys sleep on hay in the barn, now. It's even better than sleeping in beds. And the girls sleep in carts. And what d'you think—that Nesterenko only took over yesterday, and today he's after us! Look—we've given him a whole colony, and he grudges us a little hay! How d'you like

the way we've packed Granny's things? You tell him, Granny!"

Granny smiled mildly at the boys, but there were points on which she took issue with them.

"You've packed up very nicely. But where's your director going to sleep?"

"He'll be all right!" cried Shura. "Our detachment—the eleventh—has the best hay of all. Eduard Nikolayevich even scolded us—he said it was a sin to sleep on such splendid hay. But we slept on it, and afterwards we gave it to Molodets, and he ate it up like anything! We'll find a place for Anton Semyonovich—don't you worry!"

Many of the colonists had moved into the teachers' rooms, forming themselves into regular packing and guarding organizations. Lydochka's room had become the headquarters of Koval and Lapot. Koval, sallow with rage and fatigue, was seated on the window-sill, brandishing his fists, and swearing at the railway authorities.

"Wretched bureaucrats! We tell them it's for children, and they don't believe us! 'What d'you want?' I ask them. 'Shall I get you their birth certificates? Don't you know our chaps have never had any?' What's the good of talking to them, when they can't understand a word? 'One grownup can take one child without a ticket,' they say. 'But if it's a child travelling without a grownup....' 'Children! Children—you blockheads! Don't you understand it's a labour colony? Besides, it's freight cars we're asking for!' But you might as well try to reason with a block of wood! They just click, click on their abacus—'freight, demurrage, rates....' Then they dig up a whole lot of rules and regulations—one rate for horses, another for household furniture, and another if it's sowing campaign. 'You and your household furniture!' I said. 'What d'you take us for—some bourgeois family moving house?' They're so insolent, you know—petty clerks, and so insolent! Sitting there and making difficulties! 'We don't care whether you're bourgeois, or whether you're peasants,' they say. 'We only recognize passengers and consigners.' I give them the class angle, and they look me straight in the face and say: 'Since there's a tariff code, the class angle doesn't matter to us.'"

Lapot, paying no attention either to Koval's woeful tales of the railway authorities, or to my mournful stories about Kuryazh, kept turning the conversation to cheerful, familiar subjects, as if there were no such thing as Kuryazh, as if in a few days he himself were not destined to lead the Commanders' Council in this demoralized land. His frivolity depressed me at first, but my depression was soon shattered into fragments by his sparkling wit, and forgetting all about Kuryazh I found myself laughing with the rest. Lapot's original talent had developed and blossomed during the period of freedom from routine. He seemed to have magnetic powers. There were always people round him, people who had fallen in love with him, who trusted him, worshipped him—fools, cranks, madmen, and the downtrodden. Lapot knew how to sort them out, to put them away in separate compartments, to cherish them, and to enjoy them. In his hands they revealed delicate nuances of beauty, and appeared to be exceedingly interesting specimens of humanity.

To the pale, silently bewildered Gustoivan he was saying:

"Yes, there's a church in the very middle of the yard. We shan't need a deacon—you can be the deacon."

Gustoivan's pinkish lips twitched. He was known to say his prayers of an evening in a dark corner of the bedroom, and he accepted the mockery of the colonists in a spirit of martyrdom. Kozyr, the wheelwright, was not so meek.

"Why do you talk like that, Comrade Lapot—the Lord forgive you! How can Gustoivan be a deacon? He hasn't had the apostolic blessing!"

Lapot threw back his head.

"A lot that matters—blessing!" he said. "We'll put vestments on him, and, oh my!—what a deacon he'll be!"

"There has to be the blessing!" insists Kozyr in his musical tenor. "The bishop has to lay his hands on him."

Lapot squatted on his heels in front of Kozyr, blinking up at him from under his smooth, puffy lids.

"Hold on a minute, Gaffer!" he said. "Has the bishop power?"

"The bishop has power."

"And the Commanders' Council—don't you think it has any power? If the Commanders' Council were to

lay their hands on him—that would be something, now!”

“The Commanders’ Council can’t do that, my boy. It hasn’t any blessing to give,” said Kozyr, his head on one side. The discussion enchanted him.

Lapot, placing a hand on each of Kozyr’s knees, continued in a strain of friendly piety:

“It can, Kozyr, it can! The Commanders’ Council can give a blessing that would make your bishop simply bleat!”

Kozyr, old, kind, saintly, would listen attentively to Lapot’s words, letting them sink into his very heart. He was very nearly surrendering to their irresistible logic. What had the bishops and all the saints ever done for him? Nothing! But the Commanders’ Council had bestowed tangible blessings upon him—they had protected him from his wife, had given him a clean, light room, with a bed in it, they had put strong, well-fitting boots on his feet, boots made by Gud’s first detachment. Perhaps when old Kozyr dies and goes to heaven he may hope to obtain some compensation from the Lord God at last, but for his life on earth the Commanders’ Council was absolutely indispensable.

“Lapot—are you there?”

Galatenko’s grim face is peering through the window.

“Here I am! What’s up?” cries Lapot, tearing himself away from the discussion of blessings.

Galatenko clambered slowly on to the window-sill, exposing to Lapot’s view the brimful goblet of his wrath, from which arose in a slow spiral the fumes of human suffering. Great tears were forming in Galatenko’s large eyes.

“Tell him, Lapot! Tell him! I can’t trust myself not to break his mug....”

“Who?”

“Taranets!”

Galatenko, catching sight of me, smiles, and wipes away his tears.

“What’s the matter, Galatenko?”

“What right has he? He thinks, just because he’s the commander of the fourth detachment.... He’s been told to make a loose box for Molodets, and he says—‘one for Molodets, and one for Galatenko.’”

"Who did he say it to?"

"To his carpenters—the boys."

"Well?"

"It's a loose box for Molodets, so's he won't jump out of the truck, and they caught me and measured me, and Taranets told them—'Molodets will be on the left, and Galatenko on the right.'"

"What does he mean?"

"The loose box!"

Lapot scratched thoughtfully behind his ear, and Galatenko waited in fixed patience to see what Lapot would say about it.

"But you wouldn't jump out of the truck, would you?"

On the other side of the window Galatenko shifted his feet, and looked down at them.

"Why should I? Where would I jump to? And he says: 'make a strong loose box, or he'll smash the truck to pieces.'"

"Who will?"

"He means me!"

"But you wouldn't, would you?"

"As if I would do such a thing!"

"Taranets thinks you're awfully strong. Don't be offended."

"I'm strong all right. But what's the loose box for?"

Lapot jumped through the open window, and bustled off to the carpentry shop, Galatenko following him.

Lapot's collection includes Arkadi Uzhikov. Lapot considers Arkadi an extremely rare specimen, and talks about him with sincere enthusiasm.

"You'll only come across a fellow like Arkadi once in a lifetime. He never moves from my side, he's afraid of the boys. He sleeps and eats beside me."

"Is he so fond of you?"

"Isn't he just! But I had some money—Koval gave it me to buy rope—and Arkadi pinched it."

Lapot suddenly burst out into loud laughter, and turned to Arkadi, seated beside him on the box.

"Tell us, you funny guy, where did you hide it?"

Without changing his pose, and showing not the least embarrassment, Arkadi replied listlessly.

"I put it in the pocket of your old trousers."

"And then what happened?"

"You found it."

"I didn't find it, you ass, I caught you in the act. Didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

The dull eyes of Arkadi never moved from Lapot's face, but these were not human eyes, they were some sort of inferior, lifeless, glassy accoutrements.

"He would steal from you, too, Anton Semyonovich, he really would! Would you?"

Uzhikov said nothing.

"He would!" cried Lapot joyfully, and Uzhikov followed his hero's expressive gesture with his usual listlessness.

Nitsenko, too, was one of Lapot's merry-men. He had a long, skinny neck, with a protruding Adam's apple, and a tiny head poised on his shoulders with the absurd arrogance of a camel. Of him Lapot said:

"You could make all sorts of things out of this block-head—cart shafts, spoons, troughs, spades. And he thinks he's a tough customer!"

I was glad this odd lot was drawn to Lapot. It helped me to isolate them from the general ranks of the Gorky-ites. Lapot's inexhaustible stream of witticisms seemed to act as a kind of disinfectant poured over them, intensifying my impressions of the business-like order and efficiency of the colony. And just now this impression was very vivid, and somehow quite new.

All the colonists asked me about Kuryazh, but I could see they only asked out of politeness, as people say: "How are you?" when they meet. The interest in Kuryazh had retreated to some remote corner of our collective, where it had dried up and evaporated. Other interests and experiences were predominant—the freight cars, the loose boxes for Molodets and Galatenko, the teachers' rooms, crammed with belongings all cast upon the responsibility of the colonists, the nights in the hay, *The Flea*, Nesterenko's meanness, bundles, crates, carts, the new velvet skullcaps, the mournful faces of various Marusyas, Natalyas, and Tatyanas in Goncharovka—tender shoots of love doomed to frustration. The upper levels of the collective were diversified with funny stories and jokes,

with peals of laughter, and with the play of artless raillery.

They were like the waves which sweep over the surface of a field of ripe wheat, so that from a distance the field seems to be carefree and playful. But in reality there is strength slumbering in every ear, and the ear swaying gently in the caressing breeze does not spill a single grain, or know a single moment of anxiety. And just as the ear doesn't have to worry about threshing time, the colonists had no need to worry about Kuryazh. The threshing would come in due time, and in due time there would be work to do in Kuryazh.

The bare feet of the colonists trod with a lingering grace over the warm paths, their belted figures swaying slightly as they moved. Their eyes smiled peacefully at me, and their lips barely moved in the cordial salute of a friend. In the park, in the garden, on the mournful, abandoned benches, on the grass, on the riverbank, everywhere were groups of figures. Experienced fellows were telling stories from their past—of their mothers, of machine guns, of steppe and forest bands. Over them were the still treetops, the flight of bees, the fragrance of "snow queens" and of white acacia blossom.

Somewhat embarrassed, I discovered that here was an idyll. It seemed an impossibility. Ironical images—shepherds, zephyrs, cupids—invaded my mind. But life sometimes jests, and its jests are sometimes almost insolent! Under a lilac bush sat a snub-nosed, wizened little chap, known as "Puggy," his face wrinkled up as he was blowing a rustic whistle. Surely that was no mere whistle he was playing on! It must be a flute, or even panpipe, for Puggy had the mischievous face of a faun. And in the meadow the girls were weaving wreaths. Natasha Petrenko in a wreath of cornflowers touched me to tears with her ethereal beauty. And suddenly, from behind the fluffy wall of an elder-bush, Pan himself emerges on to the path, his grey moustache trembling in a smile, his light-blue eyes narrowing.

"I've been looking for you everywhere! They said you'd gone to town. Well, have you got round those parasites? It's time for the children to go, and they keep delaying us, the idiots!"

"Listen, Kalina Ivanovich," I said, "while the boys are still here, you'd better go to your son in town. Once we've gone it'll be harder for you to go."

Kalina Ivanovich fumbled for his pipe in the deep pockets of his waistcoat.

"I was the first to come here, and I'll be the last to leave. The muzhiks brought me here, let them take me away, the parasites! I've arranged with that Moussi fellow. There won't be any difficulty about moving me. You've probably read in your books how long the world has existed. What a lot of old fools like me have been moved since then, and not one lost! They'll move me, tee-hee!"

Kalina Ivanovich and I began strolling along the alley. Pulling at his pipe, he scrutinized the top of the bushes, the gleaming backwater of the Kolomak, the girls in their wreaths, Puggy and his flute.

"If I knew how to lie the way some parasites can, I'd say I'll come and see Kuryazh one day. But I tell you straight out—I never will. A man's a poor thing, you see, a tender plant, whether he's done any work in his day or not, he's just a nuisance—theoretically he's a man, but practically he's good for nothing but boiling down for glue. When people grow wiser they'll make glue out of old men. Very good glue might be made from them."

After my sleepless nights and my journeyings about the town, I was in a brittle sort of state—the universe seemed to be ringing softly, to be revolving in shining spirals. Kalina Ivanovich was recalling all sorts of past happenings, but I could only think of him in his old age of today, and I wanted to stick up for it.

"You haven't had such a bad life, Kalina Ivanovich!"

"I'll tell you what," said Kalina Ivanovich, halting to knock out his pipe. "I'm nobody's fool, I know what's what. Life is a bungled affair, when you come to think of it! You eat, you digest your food, you sleep, then you eat again—bread, or maybe meat."

"Wait a minute! And what about work?"

"And who wanted your work? See what a mechanism it is—those who need your work are the ones who don't work themselves, the parasites; and the ones who don't need it a bit, they must work like oxen."

We fell silent.

"It's a pity I lived such a short time under the Bolsheviks," continued Kalina Ivanovich. "They do everything their own way, the devils, and they're rough fellows, and I don't like roughness, of course. But still life has become different under them. All they care about is whether you do your work—nothing else interests them. Did you ever hear the like? Now everyone needs your work. There are a few imbeciles like us who don't understand a thing, and would work and forget to eat, if their wives didn't get at them. Do you remember how I came to you once, and said: 'Have you had your dinner?' And it was the evening already. And you, tee-hee!—you began trying to remember if you had had dinner, or not. 'I think I have, but perhaps it was yesterday!' You forgot, tee-hee! Did you ever hear the like?"

Kalina Ivanovich and I strolled about the park till the approach of dark. When the daylight had been turned off at the celestial main, Kostya Sharovsky came running up, slapping his bare legs with a branch to keep off the mosquitoes, and exclaiming indignantly:

"They're making-up already, and you keep walking up and down, up and down! And the boys say you're to come. You should see how funny the tsar looks! Lapot's acting the tsar—what a nose he's put on!"

All our friends from the village and farmsteads had gathered in the theatre. The Lunacharsky Commune was there in full force. Nesterenko was seated behind the curtain on the throne, trying to beat off the boys, who were accusing him of meanness, ingratitude, and hard-heartedness. Olya Voronova, making herself up in front of the mirror as the tsar's daughter, was worrying.

"They'll tease the life out of my Nesterenko!"

It was not the first time *The Flea* had been given in the colony, but this performance was a very trying one, owing to the fact that the chief make-up men—Butsai and Gorkovsky—were in Kuryazh. The make-up was therefore excessively garish. But nobody minded this—the performance was a mere excuse for a farewell gathering. There was little need for formal farewells. The Pirogovka and Goncharovka girls were being hurled back to the prehistoric age, for in their minds history began with the arrival of the irresistible Gorkytes on the banks of the Kolomak.

In the corners of the great mill shed, next to stoves which had not been lit since March, in the murky passages behind the stage, on any bench that came handy, on tree stumps, on all sorts of theatrical "properties," sat the girls, their flowered kerchiefs slipping on to their shoulders, exposing mournfully-bowed auburn heads. Neither words, celestial melodies, nor sighs could any longer fill these maiden hearts with joy. Tender, melancholy fingers toyed with the fringe of the shawls on their knees, and this too was superfluous, a tardy demonstration of grace. The colonists stood next to the girls trying to look as if their hearts were burdened with grief. Every now and then Lapot peeped out of the actors' dressing room, wrinkling his nose in ironic sympathy with the pangs of love, and saying in a tender, grieving voice:

"Petya, old man! Marusya can sit and say nothing without you—do go and dress! Have you forgotten you're the horse?"

Petya adroitly converts his impudent sigh of relief into a regretful farewell breath, and abandons Marusya to solitude. Well for the Marusyas that their hearts are made up of detachable parts! In two months' time Marusya will unscrew the rusting image of Petya, and, polishing up her heart with spirits of hope, screw into the empty socket a shining new part—the image of Panas from Storozhevoye, who is at this moment taking a sad farewell of the Gorkytes in a group of colonists, while secretly adapting himself to the vacant place in Marusya's heart. Altogether, all's well with the world, and Petya is pleased with his role—that of a horse in Ataman Platov's troika.

The solemn farewell part of the programme began. After good, warm words, words of adjuration, of gratitude, of working solidarity, the curtain was drawn, exposing the silly, trifling tsar, surrounded by his decrepit generals, continually bleeding sawdust, which the slow-moving janitor was always sweeping up. From the back door of the mill shed the three-span of stallions—Galatenko, Koryto and Fedorenko—galloped onstage. Chewing the bit, tossing their heavy heads, breaking up the "property" furniture, straining at the taut reins in the hands of their driver, Taranets, they plunged with a clatter on to the stage, the ancient planks cracking beneath them. A rigid

figure hangs on to Taranets's belt from the back. This is Ataman Platov, played by a rising star—Oleg Ognev. The audience ruthlessly extinguishes the last sparks of its grief, and plunges into the slough of theatrical make-believe and beauty. Kalina Ivanovich sits in the front row wiping away the tears with a wrinkled yellow finger, forgetting all in his amusement.

All of a sudden the image of Kuryazh came into my mind.

Oh, no, people don't pray for mercy, now, and no one is going to take this cup from my lips! Suddenly I realized that I was exhausted, thoroughly worn out.

It was bright and cosy in the actors' dressing room. Lapot, in his royal attire, his crown on the back of his head, was sitting in Ekaterina Grigoryevna's deep armchair and assuring Galatenko that he had performed the part of the horse brilliantly.

"I've never seen such a horse in my life, let alone in the theatre!"

"Get up, get up!" said Olya Voronova to Lapot. "Let Anton Semyonovich sit down."

And in this comfortable armchair I went to sleep without waiting for the end of the performance. Through my sleep I could hear the boys of the eleventh detachment arguing in deafening sopranos:

"Let's take him out! Let's take him out!"

But Silanti whispered, trying to dissuade them:

"Don't shout so! Let a man have his sleep out! And that's all about it. That's how it is, you see."

6

FIVE DAYS

The next day, after taking a tender farewell of Kalina Ivanovich, Olya, and Nesterenko, I left. Koval remained to fulfil with the utmost precision the plans for entraining our property, and to leave for Kharkov with the whole colony in five days' time.

I was vaguely apprehensive. The natural balance of my mind had been temporarily upset, and I was full of misgivings. And sure enough I was plunged into trouble the moment I entered the monastery gates, having arrived there from the Ryzhov station at about one p. m.

There was a regular investigatory body in session—Bregel, Klyamer, Yuryev and a public prosecutor—while for some reason or other the ex-director of Kuryazh was flitting about in their midst. Bregel addressed me severely:

“They’ve begun beating each other up already.”

“Who’s been beating up who?”

“Unfortunately we don’t know whose work it is, and who’s behind it all.”

The public prosecutor, a stout, spectacled individual, glanced furtively at Bregel, and said softly:

“I think the case is clear. There may not have been any incitement. Some old score or other, you know. As a matter of fact it’s not a very serious type of rough-housing. Still it would be of interest to know who did it. The director’s here, now. Perhaps he will be able to find out more about it, and let us know.”

Bregel was obviously dissatisfied with the public prosecutor’s behaviour. Without another word to me she got into the car. Yuryev smiled sheepishly at me. The commission took its departure.

The colonist Doroshko had been beaten up in the yard at the moment when, having collected half a dozen pairs of fairly new boots from the dormitories, he was going through the gate with them. All the circumstances of the nocturnal incident went to prove that the attack had been well organized, and Doroshko had been watched while he was stealing the boots. As he had approached the belfry, somebody had come from behind the acacia bushes beside an adjoining annex, thrown a blanket over him, flung him down, and beaten him up. Gorkovsky, who had just been coming out of the stable, had seen in the darkness a few smallish forms running in all directions; they had left Doroshko where he was, but taken the blanket with them. An immediate search for the culprits in the dormitories had produced no results—everybody was asleep. Doroshko was covered with bruises, and had to be placed in the colony hospital; the doctor who was called found no serious damage. But Gorovich nevertheless had immediately reported the incident to Yuryev.

The investigatory commission headed by Bregel went energetically to work. Our Advance Mixed was called back from the field, and its members, one at a time, cross-exam-

ined. Klyamer in particular had been anxious to find proof that it was the Gorkyites who had been responsible for the beating up. Not a single teacher was questioned, indeed all contact with them was avoided, the commission contenting itself with sending for this or that individual. Of the Kuryazhites, only Perets and Khovrakh were summoned, and examined in a separate room, and this only, no doubt, because they had shouted outside the window:

"Ask *us*! What's the good of asking them? Are they to beat us up, and we can't complain to anyone?"

Doroshko, a wizened boy of sixteen, lay in the little hospital, and looked at me with his fixed, dry gaze, whispering:

"I've been wanting to tell you for ever so long—"

"Who beat you up?"

"What did they come poking their noses in for? What does it matter who beat me up? It wasn't your chaps who beat me up, I tell you, and they want to prove it was. If it hadn't been for your chaps, they'd have killed me. That commander fellow came out, and they all ran away, the chaps...."

"Who was it?"

"I'm not going to tell you. I didn't steal for myself. They told me in the morning that I was to do it."

"Khovrakh?"

Silence.

"Khovrakh?"

Doroshko buried his face in the pillow and wept. I could hardly make out his words through his sobs.

"He'll find out ... I thought ... it would be the last time ... I thought...."

I waited for him to calm down, before asking him again:

"So you don't know who beat you up?"

Suddenly he sat up in his bed, holding his head in his hands, and swaying from left to right in a paroxysm of grief. Then, still holding his head, his eyes still full of tears, he smiled:

"No, no, of course not! But it wasn't the Gorkyites! That's not the way they would have beaten me!"

"How would they have done it?"

"I don't know how, but they wouldn't have used a blanket. They'd never use a blanket."

"What makes you cry? Are you in pain?"

"No, I'm not in pain, it's only . . . I thought it would be the last time. . . . And you would never know. . . ."

"Never mind," I said. "You get better, and we'll forget all about it."

"Oh, Anton Semyonovich, do forget it!"

At last he calmed down.

I began investigations on my own. Gorovich and Kirghizov gesticulated wildly and began to lose their tempers. Ivan Denisovich even tried to look sulky and knit his brows, but his countenance had been overlaid with the armour-plate of good-humour for so long that these grimaces only made me laugh.

"What are you looking so cross about, Ivan Denisovich?"

"Me? I'm not! How am I to know what they want to kill one another for? Old scores, I suppose."

"I wonder if they were so very old!"

"Why shouldn't they be?"

"I think these are quite new scores. Oh, yes—are you quite certain it wasn't any of the Gorkyites?"

"Don't! For goodness' sake!" expostulated Ivan Denisovich. "Why the hell should any of ours have done it?"

Volokhov looked savagely at me.

"Who? Ours? A kid like that! Beat him up? Which of us would do such a thing? If it had been Khovrakh, or Churilo, or Korotkov—I'd beat them up *now*, if you'd only let me! What if the kid did steal the boots? They steal something every night. And how many boots are there left? There won't be anything left, anyhow, by the time our chaps get here. To hell with them—let them steal! We pay no attention to it. But they won't work—that's quite another matter!"

I found Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Lydochka in their empty room in a state of utter bewilderment. The arrival of the investigatory commission had upset them more than anything else. Lydochka was seated at the window, staring fixedly out at the cluttered yard. Ekaterina Grigoryevna looked mournfully into my face.

"Are you satisfied?" she said.

"What with?"

"With everything—this hermitage, the boys, your chiefs?"

I thought a moment: was I satisfied? After all what special reasons had I for dissatisfaction? Everything had so far come more or less up to my expectations.

"Yes, I am," I said. "And anyhow you know I'm not one to whine."

"*I'm whining!*" said Ekaterina Grigoryevna, without a smile or the least sign of animation. "Yes, *I'm whining!* I don't understand why we have to be so lonely! Here we have a great misfortune, a real human tragedy, and some sort of aristocrats come to us, putting on airs and despising us! We shan't be able to hold out in such loneliness. I won't . . . I can't. . . ."

Lydochka, tapping slowly with her fingers on the window-sill, did her best to soothe Ekaterina Grigoryevna, but it was obvious that she was with difficulty restraining her own sobs.

"I'm just a nobody!" she cried. "But I want to work, I'm longing to work—I might even be capable of something heroic. But I'm . . . I'm a human being, not a mere cipher."

She turned towards the window again, and I shut the door tight as I went out on to the high, shaky porch. Vanka Zaichenko and Kostya Vetkovsky were standing there. Kostya was laughing.

"Go on! Did they eat them all up?"

Vanya traced the line of the horizon with an aristocratic gesture.

"Every bit!" he said. "They made bonfires and baked them, and gobbled them up. That's all! See? And then they lay down for a sleep, and didn't they sleep just! Our detachment was working next to them, we were sowing melons. We laughed, and their commander, Petrushko, he laughed, too . . . that's all! And he said: 'We had a fine meal of baked potatoes!'"

"D'you mean to say they ate up *all* the potatoes? There were forty poods."

"All of them! They baked them and ate them up. They hid some of them in the woods or threw them about the field. And then they went to sleep. They didn't come to dinner, either. Petrushko said: 'What do we need dinner

for, we've been planting potatoes!' Odaryuk said to him: 'You're a pig!' And they had a fight. And your Misha was there at first, explaining how to plant the potatoes. But then he was called to the commission."

Vanya no longer wore long, ragged trousers, but had on shorts—shorts with pockets, shorts such as were only made in the Gorky Colony. Shelaputin or Toska must have shared his wardrobe with Vanya. Vanya, while talking to Vetkovsky, waving his hands about, bouncing up and down on his slender legs, kept looking sideways at me, and every now and then warm flashes of charming, boyish irony lit up his eyes.

"You all right again, Ivan?" I asked.

"Ha!" cried Vanya, patting his chest. "I'm all right! I'm in 1-M Mixed. We've been planting melons. First Denis worked with us, and when he was called away we went on by ourselves. Wait and see what fine melons will come up! When are the Gorkytes coming? In five days? Won't it be interesting to see what they're like—all these Gorkytes! Won't it just!"

"What do *you* think, Vanya—who beat up Doroshko?"

Vanya suddenly turned an earnest countenance upon me, fixing his eyes on my glasses. His cheeks twitched, relaxed, and twitched again, he shook his head, drew a finger downwards from the top of his ear, and smiled.

"I don't know."

And he started away from me with a purposeful air.

"Vanya! Wait a minute! You know—and you've got to tell me!"

Vanya halted at the wall of the church, looked at me from afar, seemed to feel a moment's embarrassment, and then brought out, simply and coolly, like a grown man, emphasizing every word:

"I'll tell you the truth. I was there, but who else was there I'm not going to tell you. He shouldn't have stolen!"

We both fell silent. Kostya had already slipped away. We thought, and we thought, and at last I said to Vanya:

"You're under arrest. Go to the Pioneers' Room. Report to Volokhov that you're under arrest till the last post."

Vanya looked up, nodded without a word, and ran off to the Pioneers' Room.

These five days stand out in my consciousness like one

long blank—just a blank, and nothing more. I should have difficulty in recalling now any details of my activities during this time. Probably they were not so much activities as a sort of inward movement, or perhaps just a suspension of well-drilled and unified forces. It seemed to me at the time that I was in a state of violent activity, that I was analyzing this, deciding that. But in reality I was simply waiting for the Gorkyites to come.

But we did achieve certain things, nonetheless.

I remember: our regular rising at five a. m., our regular, patient fury at the sight of the utter refusal of the Kuryazhites to follow our example. The Advance Mixed hardly ever slept during this time, for there was always something of the utmost urgency to be done. Sherre arrived the day after my return. For two hours he went about measuring fields, yards, outhouses, and terraces, looking somewhat aggrieved as he paced them with his field-marshal's stride, preserving complete silence and nibbling at all sorts of rubbish plucked from the vegetable kingdom. In the evening the Gorkyites, tanned, lean, and dust-covered, began to clear the ground on which our enormous herd of swine was to be housed.

Digging was begun on pits for forcing-beds and hot-houses. Volokhov displayed enormous skill as a commander and organizer in those days. He would leave one person to look after two teams of horses in the field, using the rest for other work. Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich went out in the morning, brandishing a particularly impressive spade, and calling to a group of inquisitive Kuryazhites: "Come and dig, ye valiant men!"

The valiant men would turn away and go about their own business. If, on their way, they encountered Butsai, dark as night, clad in shorts, they listened just as unresponsively to the invitation he delivered in deep bass tones: "You lazy bums! How long am I going to work for you?"

Some of the *Rabfak* students came in the evenings to wield a spade, but I sent them back to Kharkov as fast as possible. They had their spring examinations before them, and that was no joking matter. Our first batch of *Rabfak* students were to get into the VUZ, and this meant more to me than any Kuryazh.

I remember much work of all sorts accomplished in those five days, and much merely begun. Borovoy, rapidly putting the finishing touches to spacious, draught-proof toilets, had been reinforced by a veritable army of carpenters, working on underground cold-storage rooms, the school, the apartments, hotbeds, and a greenhouse. Three electricians were busy at the power plant. Another three were poking about among the entrails of the earth, for we had learned from the inhabitants of Podvorky that there had been water laid on in Kuryazh in the days of the monastery, and sure enough a sturdy cistern was discovered on the upper floor of the belfry, and we soon hit upon pipes buried in the earth.

The yard at Kuryazh was littered with boards, chips and logs, and scored with trenches—the restoration period was in full swing.

We did very little at that time for the improvement of the sanitary condition of the Kuryazhites, and to tell the truth washed but seldom ourselves. Every morning, Shelaputin and Solovyov would set off early with pails to the “wonder-working” spring in the lower slope of the hill. But by the time they had climbed the steep slope back, stumbling, and spilling the precious water, we had hastened off to our various posts, the boys had gone to the fields, and the water stood uselessly warming itself in the bucket in the stuffy Pioneers’ Room. There were other spheres, closely bordering on the sanitary, in which things were little better. Vanya Zaichenko’s tenth detachment, which had come over so wholeheartedly to our side, suddenly, without the slightest warning, and without any order having been issued, moved into our room, where they slept on the floor on their own blankets. And while this detachment was composed of delightful boys, it brought into our room several generations of lice.

From the point of view of abstract pedagogics, this may not have been such a great misfortune, but Lydochka and Ekaterina Grigoryevna begged us not to come into their room unless absolutely necessary, and if we did, not to use the furniture, or go too near tables, beds, and other susceptible objects. I should be hard put to it to say how they protected themselves, and why they were so fastidious about us, for they were in the dormitories all day

long, investigating any details they could discover about the Kuryazh hostel, according to a plan specially drawn up by our Komsomol organization.

I intended to make a thorough reorganization of all the colony's premises. I destined the long rooms of the former hostel, which the Kuryazhites called the school, for dormitories, and intended to house all the four hundred colonists in this building alone. It did not take long to clear it of the remnants of school equipment, and fill it with plasterers, carpenters, painters, and glaziers. For the school I allotted the doorless building in which the "first collective" had lived, but of course there could be no question of repairing it so long as it was full of Kuryazhites.

Yes, there was plenty of activity, but it was not pedagogical activity. There was not a single corner in the colony in which there were not people at work. Everything was in course of repairing, oiling, painting, and washing. We even had our meals in the yard, while we embarked upon a determined painting out of the faces of male and female saints on the refectory walls. The dormitories alone were as yet untouched by the spirit of restoration.

Here, as before, the Kuryazhites slept, digested their food, harboured lice, snapped up unconsidered trifles from one another, and cherished secret thoughts about me and my activities. I gave up going there, generally speaking having ceased to interest myself in the internal life of the six Kuryazh "collectives." My relations with the Kuryazhites had become clearly and austere defined: the dining room opened at seven a. m., at twelve noon, and at six p. m., one of my boys tolled the bell, and the Kuryazhites straggled in to eat. It was not, by the way, to their advantage to be dilatory, and this not merely because the dining hall was closed at a definite hour, but also owing to the fact that those who came early had a way of devouring both their own portions and those of their comrades who came late. The latecomers would curse me, the kitchen staff, and the Soviet government, but hesitated to take more energetic measures, for the commandant of our food centre was Misha Ovcharenko.

I noted with secret malice how hard it had now become for the Kuryazhites to make their way to the dining

room, and go about their business after having imbibed nourishment, their path encumbered by logs, ditches, two-handed saws, raised axes, puddles of semi-liquid clay, heaps of quicklime, and—their own consciences. All the signs showed me that real tragedies were going on in these souls—no mere melodramas, but real Shakespearian tragedies. “To be, or not to be”—that was their question.

They would stand about in small groups wherever work was going on, and then, glancing furtively over their shoulders at their comrades, shuffle off to the dormitories with guilty, meditative steps. But there was no longer anything exciting to do in the dormitories, there wasn't even anything left to steal. Once again they would wander out to get closer to the work going on, ashamed to lower their prestige in their comrades' eyes by raising the white flag and asking to be allowed at least to carry something from one place to another. The Gorkytes sped past them like flying boats, ready to avoid any and every obstacle by leaping into the air. The Kuryazhites, overwhelmed by this purposefulness, would once again fall into the pose of a Hamlet or a Coriolanus. Their position was, perhaps, even more tragic, for nobody had ever called out to Hamlet in spirited tones: “Get out of the way! It's two hours till dinner-time!”

With equally reprehensible malice I noted how the hearts of the Kuryazhites seemed to miss a beat when the Gorkytes were mentioned. The members of Advance Mixed occasionally gave vent to utterances which they would assuredly have refrained from had they graduated from a teachers' college:

“Just you wait! Our lot will be here soon, and then you'll find out what it means to live on others....”

Some of the older and more reckless of the Kuryazhites ventured to doubt the importance of coming events, inquiring not without irony:

“Well! And what'll be so terrible about it?”

Denis Kudlaty would reply to such a question:

“You want to know? Ha! They'll lick you into shape so your own mother won't know you!”

Misha Ovcharenko, who was not fond of vagueness and obscurity, expressed himself still more lucidly:

"There'll be as many black eyes as there are bums who won't work—two hundred and eighty, are there? Oh what a sight your faces will be. It'll be awful to look at them!"

Khovrakh, hearing such words, would spit out between his teeth:

"Black eyes! This isn't the Gorky Colony! You'll have Kharkov to deal with!"

Misha considered the point raised of such importance that he stopped working for a moment, and said with mock tenderness:

"My dear man! What's that you say? Not the Gorky Colony, but Kharkov, and all that? Who d'you think's going to keep you for nothing, old pal? Ask yourself—who's going to bother about you?"

Still talking, Misha returned to his work, and regained his grip on his tool.

"What's your name?" he continued.

Khovrakh started in amazement.

"What?"

"Your name, I said! Dormouse? Or maybe Hedgehog?"

Khovrakh reddened with annoyance and confusion.

"What the hell? . . ."

"Tell me your name, can't you?"

"My name's Khovrakh."

"A-a-h! Khovrakh, so it is! I'd almost forgotten! I could see there was something carrotty always getting underfoot, and no use to anyone. Now, if you were to work, pal, what with one thing or another, every now and then one would have to say: 'Khovrakh, give me that!', 'Aren't you ready, Khovrakh?', 'Hold that, Khovrakh, old man!' But as it is, of course, one keeps forgetting. Get along with you, out of the way! Can't you see I'm busy? I've got to mend this barrel, you see; they bring soup, and tea, and washing-up water all in the same pot now, and you've got to be fed. If you're not fed, you know, you'll kick the bucket, and then you'll stink, and that's not nice, and a coffin will have to be made for you—more work. . . ."

Khovrakh at last manages to tear himself from Misha. Misha calls after him tenderly:

"Go out and get a breath of air. It'll do you good—it'll do you a lot of good!"

Had Khovrakh begun to believe in the benefits of fresh air, and to inspire the whole of the Kuryazh aristocracy with this belief? However that may have been they had been trying to keep out of sight of late, but not before I had made myself familiar with the Kuryazh branch of blue blood. On the whole they weren't such a bad lot. After all each had his own personality, and that's a thing I always like. Perets was my favourite. He swaggered about the place, trained his forelock right down to his eyebrows, wore his cap over one eye, held his cigarette by his underlip alone, and was a dab at spitting. But I could see that his pock-marked face regarded me with curiosity—the curiosity of a bright, lively lad.

I joined their company one evening, when they were all seated on the stones intended for the building of the pigs' solarium, smoking and chatting listlessly. I stopped in front of them, and began to roll myself a cigarette with newspaper preparatory to asking them for a light. Perets, looking at me in a cheerful, friendly way, said loudly:

"You work hard, Comrade Director, but you have to smoke shag. Surely the Soviet government might make cigarettes for you?"

I went up to Perets, bent over his hand, and lit my cigarette. Then I said to him, just as loudly and cheerfully, instilling into my voice an infinitesimal note of authority.

"Come on, now—off with your cap!"

The smile in Perets's eyes changed to astonishment, but his mouth went on smiling.

"What's up?"

"Take your cap off—you can hear me, can't you?"

"All right—I'll take it off."

I pushed back his forelock with my hand, looked steadily into his somewhat alarmed countenance, and said:

"Aha! All right, that'll do!"

Perets looked up at me with a steady gaze, but I, having got my cigarette alight, and emitted a few puffs, turned away and went to the carpentry shop.

At that time I was feeling the full impact of my pedagogical duty, in literally every movement I made, and in every detail of my appearance, down to the faint gleam

of my belt: these boys must be made to like me. Their hearts must be touched by irresistible sympathy, and at the same time they must be made to feel in the very depths of their hearts that I did not give a fig for their sympathy—that they could be offended, could curse me, could grind their teeth, and it would all make no difference.

The carpenters were finishing work, and Borovoy was beginning an earnest discourse on the superiority of good linseed oil over bad linseed oil. This new problem interested me so profoundly that I did not even notice that someone was tugging at my sleeve from behind. There was another tug, and I looked round. Perets was looking at me.

“Well?”

“Listen—what did you look at me like that for? Eh?”

“Oh, for no particular reason. Look here, Borovoy—we shall have to get the proper oil, you know!”

Borovoy joyfully continued his discourse on the right sort of oil. I noticed the fury with which Perets looked at Borovoy, while waiting for him to finish talking. At last Borovoy lifted his box with a great clatter, and we moved towards the belfry. Perets walked beside us, plucking at his upper lip. Borovoy went downwards towards the village, and I, my hand behind my back, faced Perets.

“What d’you want?”

“Why did you look at me? Answer me!”

“Is your name Perets?”

“M’h’m!”

“And your first name—Stepan?”

“How d’you know that?”

“Aren’t you from Sverdlovsk?”

“Well, what of it? How d’you know I am?”

“I know everything. I know you steal and roughhouse, I only didn’t know whether you were a fool, or a clever chap.”

“Well?”

“That was a very silly question of yours, about cigarettes—very silly! As silly as it could be! Sorry if I’ve offended you!”

Even in the dusk I could see how red Perets had got, how the blood was hammering at his temples, how hot he was . . . he fell back a pace awkwardly, and glanced round.

"That's all right, nothing to be sorry about! Of course! But what was so silly about it?"

"Isn't it clear? You know I have a lot to do, and no time to go to town to buy cigarettes. You know that. And I have no time, because the Soviet government has set me the task of making your life better and happier—*your* life, d'you understand me? Perhaps you don't! In that case, let's go to bed."

"I do," said Perets huskily, digging at the earth with the toe of his boot.

"You do, do you?"

I looked him in the eyes scornfully, right into the very middle of the pupils. I could see how my thought and my will were forcing their way into those pupils. Perets drooped his head.

"You understand, you bum, and yet you carp at the Soviet government. You're a fool, a real fool!"

I turned towards the Pioneers' Room. Perets barred my way with an outflung arm.

"All right, all right, say I'm a fool! So what?"

"So I took a look at your face. I wanted to find out if you really were a fool, or not."

"And did you?"

"I did."

"Well?"

"Go and look at yourself in the glass."

I went home without taking note of Perets's further emotional reactions.

As I became more familiar with the Kuryazh faces I was enabled to discover certain changes of expressions on them. Many of them looked at me with frank sympathy, their faces lighting up with that delightful smile, a mixture of candour and embarrassment, only to be seen on the faces of waifs. I already knew many of them by name, and could distinguish some of their voices.

The snub-nosed Volodya Zoren, with rosy cheeks and a delicate play of muscles around the eyes which not even the dirt of ages could obscure, frequently haunted my paths. He was thirteen years old, always kept his hands behind his back, spoke little, but smiled continually. He was a good-looking little chap, with dark, curving eyelashes. He would raise them slowly, allow a light from

somewhere deep down to show in his dark eyes, throw his head back, say nothing, and smile.

"Say something, Zoren," I would implore him. "I should love to know what your voice sounds like!"

He would blush and turn away, hurt, drawling out in a hoarse whisper:

"We-e-e-ll. . . ."

Volodya had a friend, as rosy, round-faced and good-looking as himself—Mitka Nisinov, a good-natured, guileless soul. Under the old regime such souls were made into cobblers' apprentices, and tavern boys. I used to look at him and think: "Mitka, Mitka, what shall we make of you? How shall we redesign your life against the Soviet background?"

Mitka would also blush and turn away; he did not indulge in hoarse whisperings, just knit his straight black brows and moved his lips. But I *did* know the sound of Mitka's voice—it was a deep contralto, the voice of a woman—beautiful, well-groomed, and spoilt—with a woman's singsong modulations and sudden nightingale notes.

I would listen to this voice with pleasure when Mitka talked to me about the inhabitants of Kuryazh.

"You see that one over there—running? Confound it, where is he running to? Volodya, look, look! It's Buryak! What? You don't know Buryak? He can drink thirty glasses of milk at a time. He's gone to the cowshed. . . . And that one—he's a rat—that one looking out of the window—oh, he's a rat! He's such a toady, you have no idea, as smooth as oil he is. I bet he sucks up to you, too!"

"It's Vanka Zaichenko," said Zoren, turning away with displeasure, and reddening all of a sudden.

Mitka is a clever imp. He is ashamed for Zoren with his jealous outburst, and his glance seems to apologize for his friend's tactlessness.

"Oh, no!" he says. "I don't mean Vanka! He has his own line."

"And what's his line?"

"Well, his line. . . ."

Mitka began drawing something in the earth with his big toe.

"Tell me!"

"There's nothing to tell. The moment Vanka came to the colony he started getting together that bunch, didn't he, Volodya? Well, they beat them up, too, but still they had their own line...."

I perfectly understood Nisinov's profound philosophy, a philosophy undreamed of by our pundits.

There were plenty of rosy boys here, some good-looking, some not so good-looking, who did not have the fortune to possess their own "line." Among the sullen, wary faces, hostile as yet, I began to see more and more children whom life was dragging along lines laid down by someone else. In the old times it was a perfectly natural phenomenon, this so-called life of dependence.

Zoren and Nisinov, keen, shaggy Sobchenko, the sad and serious Vasya Gardinov, the dusky-faced gentle Sergei Khrabrenko, hung about me smiling mournfully, knitting their brows, but unable to come right over to my side. They envied Vanya Zaichenko and his bunch, following their bold flights along the lines of the new life, with wistful glances, while themselves they could only wait....

Everyone was waiting. This was so obvious and so easy to understand. They were waiting for the arrival of the Gorkytes, so mystically immaterial, so incomprehensible, so intangibly attractive. Every hour brought nearer what might be disaster or might be joy. Even among the girls every day brought forth something new and joyful. Olga Lapova had already got together her detachment—the sixth detachment, boiling over with energy. The detachment swarmed busily in their dormitory, mending, washing, whitewashing, even singing of an evening. Gulyaeva, always bustling about, kept running in, trying to conceal from me her crumpled, bedraggled blouse. Kudlaty was a frequent guest there in the evenings, and took a frankly protective interest in them. But the sixth detachment did not go out into the fields, lest it be buried beneath the explosion of such an affront to Kuryazh traditions.

Korotkov, too, was waiting. He was the main pivot of Kuryazh tradition. He was a splendid diplomat. He never put himself in the wrong by word, deed, or manner. He was no more to blame than the rest—he just didn't go to work, that was all. But the advance detachment seethed with rage against him; they detested him, and were con-

vinced beyond all manner of doubt, that Korotkov was our chief enemy in Kuryazh.

I learned later that Volokhov, Gorkovsky, and Zhorka Volkov had endeavoured to put an end to this situation by means of a little conference. They summoned Korotkov to an interview on the banks of the pond, and suggested to him that he should take himself out of the colony, and go where he liked. But Korotkov had rebutted this suggestion, saying:

"There's no need for me to go away just now. I shall stay where I am."

And the conference had to leave it at that. Korotkov never spoke to me, and showed no kind of interest in my personality. Whenever our paths crossed, he would lift his smart, light-coloured cap politely, and greet me in a rich, cordial baritone:

"How d'you do, Comrade Director!"

His handsome face with the dark, delicately fringed eyes would be turned on me courteously, unmistakably signalling the unspoken words: "You see, we needn't be in one another's way, you stick to yours, and I'll keep to mine. My respects, Comrade Director!"

But the day after my evening conversation with Perets, Korotkov met me during breakfast at the kitchen window, turned away considerately while I gave an order of some sort, and then suddenly addressed me:

"Excuse me, Comrade Director, is there a lockup in the Gorky Colony?"

"No, there is not," I replied with equal gravity.

Looking at me as if I were some sort of exhibit, he continued calmly:

"But they say you put boys under arrest."

"You need have no personal anxiety," I assured him drily. "I only arrest my friends."

And I turned away immediately displaying no more interest in the subtle play of his countenance.

On the fifteenth of May I received a telegram:

"All leaving tomorrow evening by train Lapot."

I announced the contents of the telegram at supper, adding:

"The day after tomorrow we shall meet our comrades. I am extremely anxious, extremely anxious, that they

should be met as friends. You see, from now on we shall live—and work—together.”

The girls fell suddenly silent, like birds before a storm. Various little boys cast oblique glances at the faces of their comrades; on some faces the oral orifice was considerably increased, and remained a whole second in this condition.

In the corner next to the window, where there were no benches, but chairs around the table, Korotkov and his friends suddenly became extraordinarily merry, laughing loudly, and apparently exchanging witticisms.

That night a discussion of details for the reception of the Gorkytes was held by the advanced detachment, and every point of the special declaration issued by the Komsomol nucleus was considered. Kudlaty's hand travelled even more frequently than usual to the back of his head.

“You know, it makes one quite ashamed to think of the boys coming here.”

The door opened slowly, and Zhorka Volkov squeezed through the aperture with difficulty. Holding on to the table he let himself down on to a bench, and looked at us from one eye, and that a mere awkward slit in a mass of swollen bluish flesh.

“What's happened?”

“They beat me up,” whispered Zhorka.

“Who did?”

“God knows! Some muzhiks. I was coming back from the station. They met me at the crossing, and beat me up.”

“Wait a minute!” cried Volokhov. “Beat you up! Beat you up! We can see that for ourselves! But what happened? Was there anything said, or how was it?”

“Not much was said,” replied Zhorka with a doleful grimace. “One of them said: ‘Ah—Komsomol!’ And then he bashed me in the jaw.”

“And what did you do?”

“I did the same to him, of course. But there were four of them.”

“Did you get away from them?” asked Volokhov.

“No, I didn't,” replied Zhorka.

“What did you do, then?”

"Can't you see? I'm still at the crossing!"

The lads burst out into Homeric laughter, but Volokhov glanced reproachfully at his friend's painful smile.

7

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE B.

At dawn on the seventeenth I went to meet the Gorkyites at the station of Lubotin, thirty kilometres from Khar'kov. It was hot on the dingy platform, up and down which the figures of travel-worn peasants wandered languidly, while oil-stained freight handlers creaked about in heavy boots. Everything seemed to be conspiring to make the satin garments in which I had attired my soul appear inappropriate. But perhaps it wasn't satin, really—just "a cocked hat and a soldier's overcoat...." It was the day of the great battle. What if that unwieldy old fellow, the porter, pushing against me accidentally, not only failed to be horrified at his deed, but did not even notice me! What if the stationmaster showed insufficient respect, and was actually uncivil, in answer to my inquiries as to the present whereabouts of train three hundred and seventy-three B.! These wags pretended not to understand that three hundred and seventy-three B. represented my main forces, that they were the glorious legions of Marshal Koval and Marshal Lapot, that their station of Lubotin was today fated to be the rallying point for my attack upon Kuryazh! How could I explain to such people that the stake for today was, upon my honour, greater and more important than the stake at some Austerlitz or other? Napoleon's sun itself could not have eclipsed my glory today. And it had been much easier for Napoleon to wage war than for me. I should like to have seen what Napoleon would have done if he had been as bound as I was by the methods of "social education"!

Walking up and down, and glancing in the direction of Kuryazh, I called to mind that the enemy had shown certain signs of spiritual weakening today.

Early as I had risen, there had already been movement in the colony. For some reason or other there were a great many people crowding around the windows of the Pioneers' Room, while others, with a clatter of buckets, were

going down the hill to the wonder-working spring. Zoren and Nisinov were standing at the belfry gate.

"When are the Gorkyites coming? This morning?" asked Mitka gravely.

"Yes. You're up early this morning."

"M'h'm. Don't feel like sleeping, somehow. Are they coming from Ryzhov?"

"Yes. But you are going to meet them here."

"Will it be soon?"

"You'll have time to wash."

"Come on, Mitka!"

Zoren immediately went off to put my suggestion into practice.

I told Gorovich to range the Kuryazhites in the yard to meet the Gorkyites and salute the colours, but not to bring any special pressure to bear. "Just ask them."

At last a benevolent spirit in the person of the guard issued from the fastnesses of the station of Lubotin, and sounded a bell. When he had done, he revealed to me the secret of this symbolic act.

"Three hundred and seventy-three B. has signalled. It'll be here in twenty minutes."

But the plan laid down for the meeting was unexpectedly complicated and from that moment all was confusion and boyish rejoicing. Before the arrival of train three hundred and seventy-three B., a suburban train came in, and a refreshing Komsomol *Rabfak* stream rushed out of its carriages upon me. Belukhin was carrying a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"It's for meeting the fifth detachment—as if they were grand ladies. An old fellow like me can do that."

In the crowd I distinguished the ecstatic squeals of the golden-haired Oksana, and caught sight of the calm smile of Rakhil. Bratchenko was waving his arms as if he had a whip in them, and shouting to nobody in particular:

"Oho! I'm a free Cossack now! I shall ride Molodets today!"

Someone ran up, shouting:

"The train's been here for ages! It's on the tenth track."

"No—really!"

"It's on the tenth track, I tell you! It's been here for ages!"

Hardly had we recovered from the sobering shock of this information, when, from beneath a freight car on the third track the impish countenance of Lapot looked out, surveying our group ironically from beneath his puffy eyelids.

"Look!" cried Karabanov. "If that's not Lapot wriggling under the truck!"

The whole crowd rushed towards him, but he backed under the truck, declaring solemnly:

"Keep to your turns! And bear in mind—I'm only going to kiss Oksana and Rakhil, a handshake will do for the others."

Karabanov pulled Lapot out from under the car by the leg, so that his bare heels twinkled in the air.

"All right, then—you may kiss me!" said Lapot, dropping to the ground and offering his freckled cheek.

Oksana and Rakhil actually went through the ceremony of kissing, and the others rushed under the cars.

Lapot wrung my hand long, his face shining with a sincere, simple joy, not common with him.

"How was the journey?"

"Like going to the fair," said Lapot. "Only Molodets was naughty. He stamped about the truck all night. There's hardly anything left of it. How long are we going to stick here? I've told them all to be ready. If we'll be stopping long, we might as well wash, and all that...."

"Go and find out!"

Lapot ran towards the station, and I hastened to the train. There were forty-five carriages in it. From their wide-open doors and upper vents bouquets of Gorkyites were looking at me, laughing, shouting, waving their caps. Gud clambered through a nearby vent as far as his waist, blinked with emotion, and rumbled out:

"Anton Semyonovich, dear Anton Semyonovich, is this right? It's not right. Is this lawful? It's unlawful."

"Hullo, Gud, what are you grumbling at?"

"That devil, Lapot! He said, anybody getting out of the train before the signal's given will have his head cut off. Hurry up, and take command, Lapot's wearing us out! How can Lapot be in command? He can't, can he?"

Lapot, who had come up behind me, glibly took up Gud's refrain:

"Just you try to get out of the train before the signal! Just you try! D'you think it's a pleasure for me to have to deal with Scaramouches like you? Go on, then, get out!"

"You think I'm dying to get out!" continued Gud pathetically. "I'm quite all right here! It's a matter of principle."

"That's the way!" said Lapot. "Send Sinenky here!"

A minute later the pretty babyish face of Sinenky appeared behind Gud's shoulder, blinking in drowsy-eyed astonishment, his flexible red mouth stretched wide.

"Anton Semyonovich!"

"Say 'how d'you do!', you little ass! Where's your manners?" admonished Gud.

But Sinenky only looked at me, reddened, and mumbled embarrassedly:

"Anton Semyonovich? What's this? Anton Semyonovich? No? Really?"

He rubbed his eyes with his fists, and suddenly broke out in real anger against Gud.

"You said you'd wake me! You said you would! You're not a commander, you're just a horrid old Gud! You got up, yourself! Have we come to Kuryazh? Have we? Is this Kuryazh?"

Lapot laughed.

"This isn't Kuryazh. This is Lubotin. Wake up, and give the signal."

Sinenky instantly became solemn, now thoroughly awake.

"The signal? Very good!"

Now wide awake, he smiled at me, saying affectionately:

"How d'you do, Anton Semyonovich!" and clambered on to the seat for the bugle.

Two seconds later he brought it out, bestowed upon me one more angelic smile, wiped his lips with his hand, and applied them with a graceful gesture to the mouthpiece of the bugle. The station echoed to our familiar reveille.

The colonists leaped out of the cars, and I was busy shaking hands all round. Lapot was already on the roof of the car, making indignant faces at us all.

"What have you come for today? To make love? And when are you going to wash, and clean up the carriages?"

Perhaps you think we'll leave the carriages dirty, and to hell with them! Look sharp, now, or you'll get it hot! And put on your new shorts. Where's the commander on duty, eh?"

Taranets looked out from a neighbouring brake platform. He was attired in nothing but a pair of crumpled, faded shorts, with a new red band on his bare arm.

"Here I am!"

"Is this your idea of order?" roared Lapot. "Where's the water? Do you know? How long shall we be here—do you know? When will breakfast be ready—do you know? Come on—tell me!"

Taranets got on to the roof beside Lapot, and said, checking off each reply on a bent finger, that the train would stay here forty minutes, they could wash next to that tower over there, Fedorenko had the breakfast ready, and they could begin whenever they liked.

"Did you hear that?" asked Lapot of the colonists. "And if you did why are you standing there star gazing?"

The colonists' tanned legs twinkled all over the railway tracks of Lubotin, the floors of the carriages were scoured with besoms, and Fourth Mixed went in front of each carriage, collecting rubbish. Shershnev and Osadchy carried Koval, still asleep, out of the end carriage, and sat him carefully on a low railway signal post.

"We're not awake yet," said Lapot, squatting down in front of Koval.

Koval slipped off the post.

"Now we're awake!" commented Lapot.

"I'm sick of you, Carrots!" said Koval gravely. "There's no stopping this fellow," he said, holding out his hand to me. "He's been jumping about all night—now on to the roof of the carriage, now on to the engine, now in the pig's truck—he took it into his head that something was wrong there. It's Lapot's fault I've been wearing myself out these last few days. Where do we wash?"

"We know!" said Osadchy. "Let's take him, Kolka!"

They carried Koval to the tower on their arms, and Lapot said:

"And he's not satisfied! D'you know what, Anton Semyonovich, I believe this is the first time Koval has slept for a week!"

By half an hour the carriages were cleaned up, and the colonists, in gleaming dark-blue shorts and white shirts, were sitting down to breakfast. I was dragged into the staff's carriage, and made to partake of a slice of Maria Ivanovna, the sow.

From the tracks below someone said loudly:

"Lapot, the stationmaster says we shall be moving in about five minutes."

I turned at the sound of the familiar voice. The great eyes of Mark Scheinhaus were regarding me gravely, dark waves of passion still coming and going in them.

"Mark—how d'you do! How is it I didn't notice you before?"

"I was on duty at the banner," said Mark austere.

"How are you getting on, are you satisfied with your character now?"

I leaped on to the tracks. Mark caught up with me, taking the opportunity to whisper tensely:

"I'm not quite satisfied with my character yet, Anton Semyonovich. I'm not quite satisfied, I don't want to deceive you."

"Well?"

"You see—they sang songs all the way, and they're quite happy. But I think and think, and I can't sing with them. That's not character, is it?"

"And what do you think about?"

"Why they're not afraid, and I am."

"Are you afraid for yourself?"

"Oh, no, I've got nothing to be afraid of. I'm not a bit afraid for myself, I'm afraid for you, and for everyone, I'm afraid in a general way. Life was so good for them, and it probably won't be so good at Kuryazh, and who knows how it'll all end."

"Ah, but they're going into the struggle. That's a great joy, Mark, when one can take part in the struggle for a better life."

"That's what I keep saying. They're happy people, and so they can sing songs. But why can't I join in, why do I have to think all the time?"

Sinenky gave a deafening signal for a general meeting, right in my ear.

"The signal for the attack," I thought to myself, and hurried into the carriage with the rest. Looking over my shoulder I noticed how easily, throwing up his bare heels, Mark was running up to his carriage, and thought: today this youth will know the meaning of victory, or defeat. Then he'll be a Bolshevik.

The engine whistled. Lapot roared at some straggler. The train started.

Forty minutes later it steamed slowly into the Ryzhov station, and stopped on the third track. On the platform were Ekaterina Grigoryevna, Lydochka and Gulyaeva, expressions of joyous trepidation on their faces.

Koval came up to me.

"Why should we delay? Shall we start unloading?"

He ran up to the stationmaster. It appeared that the train would have to be shunted to the first track for unloading at the platform, but that there was no engine to take it. Our engine had gone back to Kharkov, and a special shunting engine had to be sent from somewhere. No such trains had ever come to Ryzhov before, and they had no shunting engine.

At first this information was taken quietly. But after half an hour had elapsed, and then an hour, we got sick of hanging about beside the train. And Molodets, who became more and more obstreperous as the sun rose in the sky, caused us anxiety. In the course of the night he had succeeded in smashing the sides of the truck into smithereens, and was now attacking the remnants. Various officials were walking up and down in front of his car, making calculations in greasy notebooks. The stationmaster was careering up and down the lines as if they were a racetrack, and demanding that the boys should not get out of the carriages, or walk about the tracks, over which passenger, suburban and freight trains were continually passing.

"But when is the engine coming?" Taranets kept asking him.

"I know no more than you do," said the stationmaster, suddenly losing his temper. "Tomorrow, perhaps."

"Tomorrow! In that case I know more than you do!"

"More? More what?"

"I know more than you do."

"What d'you mean by that?"

"I mean that if an engine isn't found, we'll shunt the train to the first track ourselves."

The stationmaster left Taranets with an impatient gesture. Then Taranets began to pester me.

"Let's shunt it, Anton Semyonovich, we can, you'll see! I know we can. Trucks can be moved very easily, even with freight. And there are three of us to a truck. Come and talk to the stationmaster about it."

"Stop that nonsense, Taranets!"

Karabanov, too, flung out his arms.

"Now he thinks he can shunt a train! It would have to be shunted right up to the signals, beyond all the points."

But Taranets insisted, and many of the boys supported him.

"Why argue?" asked Lapot. "Let's give the signal for work, and try—we don't stand to lose anything. If we shunt it—well and good, if we don't, we don't, we'll spend the night in the train."

"And what about the stationmaster?" asked Karabanov, whose eyes began to sparkle.

"The stationmaster!" replied Lapot. "The stationmaster has two hands and a tongue. Let him wave his hands and shout! It'll be all the jollier."

"No," I said. "We can't do that. We might get run over by some train. Then there'll be a mess!"

"We understand that all right. The signal will have to be lowered."

"None of that, lads!"

But the lads fairly swarmed round me. Those at the back clambered on to the brake platforms and the roofs of the carriages, and tried to persuade me in unison. They asked my permission to do only one thing—move the train two metres.

"Only two metres, and stop. No harm in that! We won't touch anyone. Only two metres, and then you shall tell us yourself."

At last I gave in. Sinenky again gave the signal—for work this time—and the colonists, who by now thoroughly understood what they had to do, ranged themselves along the uprights of the carriages. From somewhere in front the

girls were squealing. Lapot jumped out onto the platform, and waved his cap.

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" cried Taranets. "I'll get the stationmaster, he knows more than I do."

The stationmaster rushed on to the platform, his arms raised over his head.

"What are you doing? What are you doing?" he cried.

"Only two metres!" said Taranets.

"Not for anything! Not for anything! How can you think of such a thing?"

"Only two metres, I tell you!" shouted Koval. "Can't you understand?"

The stationmaster fixed his gaze blankly on Koval, and left his hands in the air. The boys were laughing beside the carriages. Lapot once more raised his hand with his cap in it, and all leaned their weight against the carriages, dug their bare feet into the sand, and, biting their lips, looked towards Lapot. He waved his cap, and, imitating his movement, the stationmaster shook his head, and opened his mouth. Someone at the back shouted: "Shove!"

For a second or two it seemed to me that nothing would come of it—the train stood motionless, but, glancing at the wheels I suddenly noticed that they were slowly revolving, and the next moment I could see the movement of the train, too. But Lapot shouted something and the boys stopped pushing. The stationmaster glanced at me, wiped the bare spot on his head, and gave a sweet, toothless old man's smile.

"Move it, all right . . . only see you don't run anyone over. . . ."

He shook his head, and suddenly burst out laughing.

"Sons-of-bitches! Now what d'you say to that! All right, push it!"

"What about the signal?"

"Don't you worry about that."

"Re-ead-y!" shouted Taranets, and once more Lapot raised his cap.

A minute later the train was rolling up to the signal, as if pushed by a powerful engine. It seemed as if the boys were just walking beside the carriages and holding on to the uprights. As by a miracle, there were boys on the brake platforms, to put the brakes on when necessary.

From the outgoing points the train had to be shunted to the second track at the other end of the station, in order, from there, to back it to the platform. Just as the train was moving past the platform, and I was imbibing deep breaths of the pungent atmosphere of emergency, somebody called to me from the platform:

"Comrade Makarenko!"

I looked round. There stood Bregel, Khalabuda, and Comrade Zoya. Bregel, towering over the platform in her loose grey coat, reminded me of a statue of Catherine the Great—so majestic did she look!

And she called to me with corresponding majesty from her pedestal:

"Comrade Makarenko—are these your pupils?"

I raised my eyes guiltily to Bregel, but at that moment her imperious accents smote my ear:

"You will be required to answer for every leg cut off!"

There was a steely strength in Bregel's voice that an empress might have envied. To make the likeness still greater, she was pointing downwards with her index finger towards one of the wheels of our train.

I was preparing to reply to the effect that the boys were very careful, and that I hoped for a happy issue, when Comrade Zoya checked my honest impulse of humility by rushing towards the edge of the platform, spluttering rapidly, and nodding her huge head in time to her words:

"They keep on prating that Comrade Makarenko is so fond of his pupils. Everybody ought to be shown how he loves them!"

Something seemed to stir in my breast, and rise into my throat. Very likely that is what happens to a dog just before it gives a growl and flies at somebody's throat. It is quite possible that I really did growl, but at the time it seemed to me that I replied extremely quietly and politely:

"Oh, Comrade Zoya, you have been cruelly misinformed. I'm such a callous being that I prefer common sense to the most passionate love!"

Comrade Zoya's green eyes received my reply with a look of hatred, but she could not bring herself to submit.

"Oh, do you? Is your social education based upon common sense?" she inquired venomously.

"We do what we can, Comrade Zoya," I said with parental pride.

Comrade Zoya might have rushed at me from the height of the platform, and perhaps this epic of my anti-education activities would have ended here, if Khalabuda had not said quite simply, as a worker might:

"They're moving the train a treat, the rascals! Look, Bregel, look at that imp! The little monkey!"

Khalabuda was by now stepping along beside Vaska Alexeyev, the orphan of so many parents. He and Vaska exchanged a word or two, and before we had had time to exhaust our fury, Khalabuda had begun to press hard against something on the carriage. I sent a flying glance at the stony majesty of the statue of Catherine, plunged through the aura of gall surrounding Comrade Zoya, and hurried to the train myself.

Twenty minutes later Molodets was being led out of the half-demolished truck, and Anton Bratchenko was galloping off to Kuryazh, leaving far behind him a cloud of dust, and the shattered nerves of the dogs of Ryzhov.

Leaving on the platform a mixed detachment under the command of Osadchy, we rapidly drew up our ranks on the small station square. Bregel and her friends were getting into an automobile, and I once more had the pleasure of seeing their faces turn green at the sound of our bugles, and the thunder of our drum-salute to our banner, which, still in its silk cover, was carried smoothly past our solemn ranks to its place. I also took up my place. Koval gave the order, and, accompanied by a crowd of little boys from the station, the Gorky columns set off for Kuryazh. Bregel's car overtook us, and as she passed me, Bregel said: "Get in!"

I shrugged my shoulders in amazement, but pressed my hand against my heart.

It was still and warm. Our way lay through a meadow, and over a remote, narrow stream, crossed by a little bridge. We marched six abreast. In front went six buglers and eight drummers, after them the commander on duty, Taranets, and myself, and after us the glorious brigade. The banner was still in its cover, its gilt tassel floating from its gleaming summit, and soaring over Lapot's head. Behind Lapot shone the freshness of white shirts, and the

ranks of the colonists, their bare legs swaying in youthful rhythm. The four rows of girls in their blue skirts marched in the middle.

Stepping out of the ranks for a moment I could see how the figures of the colonists had become suddenly sterner and more elastic. Although we were crossing uneven meadow ground, they kept strictly in rank, assiduously righting themselves if they ever fell out of step. The only sound was the thunder of the drums awaking a crisp echo which seemed to rebound from the far-off walls of Kuryazh. The tattoo of the drums did not steal away our sense of awareness today. On the contrary, the nearer we got to Kuryazh, the more energetic and exacting sounded the roll of the drums, imposing submission to its stern order not only upon the feet, but upon every impulse of the heart.

The columns entered Podvorky. The inhabitants stood behind their wicket gates and wattle fences, fierce dogs strained at their leashes, descendants of those which had at one time protected the monastery's wealth. In that village people as well as dogs had been nourished on the rich pastures of monastic history. They had all been born, bred and nourished on the copper coins for which were bartered the salvation of souls, the healing of ailments, the tears of the Holy Virgin, and feathers from the wings of the Archangel Gabriel.

All sorts of people had got stranded in Podvorky—expriests, monks, lay-brothers, grooms, monastery cooks, gardeners, and prostitutes.

And passing through this village I felt keenly the hostile glances and whispers exchanged among the groups behind the wattle fences, and could form a pretty accurate guess as to the thoughts, words, and wishes directed at us.

It was here, in the streets of Podvorky, that I suddenly realized the vast historical significance of our march, while thoroughly aware that it represented an infinitesimal phase of our epoch. My conception of the Gorky Colony was suddenly freed from outward forms and pedagogical colouring. Gone were the bends of the Kolo-mak, the elaborate buildings of the old Trepke estate, the two hundred rosebushes, the hothouse of hollow concrete. The subtle problems of pedagogy had shrivelled up and

been scattered somewhere along the road. Nothing was left but human beings, human beings with new experience, and a new place on the surface of the earth. And I suddenly realized that our colony was performing a task which, slight as it might be, was nonetheless acutely political, a veritably socialist task.

And so marching along the streets of Podvorky was like passing through enemy country, in which people, their interests, their spider-like adjustments, while still showing quivering signs of life, clung tenaciously to the past.

And within the monastery walls, just coming into sight, were stacked ideas and prejudices which were hateful to me; sentimental idealization of the intellectuals, prosaic, commonplace formalism, facile tears, and the fantastic ignorance of officialdom. I pictured to myself the vast area of this boundless rubbish heap—we had been traversing it several years, several thousand kilometres, and still it lay rotting before us, to right and to left of us, still it surrounded us on all sides. And it was all this which made the little Gorky Colony, now deprived of every material bond—cut off from its communications, base, and kin—seem so tiny. Trepke had been abandoned forever, Kuryazh was not yet conquered.

The ranks of the drummers had embarked upon the ascent of the slope. The monastery gate was in view. From out of it sped Vanya Zaichenko, in shorts, stood as if rooted to the spot for the space of a second, and then flew like an arrow downhill towards us. I was quite frightened, thinking something must have happened, but Vanya pulled up sharp in front of me, and begged, wiping the tears from his cheeks with one finger:

“Anton Semyonovich, let me go with you! I don’t want to stand there!”

“Come on, then!”

Vanya fell into step beside me, and threw up his head. Then he caught my steady gaze, dried away a tear, and gave a frank smile, breathing out relief and emotion.

The drums rumbled deafeningly in the tunnel-like belfry gate. The Kuryazh masses were drawn up in several rows, Gorovich standing motionless in front of them, his hand raised in the salute.

8
HOPAK

The Gorky columns and the Kuryazh crowd were drawn up opposite each other at a distance of seven or eight metres. The ranks of the Kuryazhites, hastily assembled by Pyotr Ivanovich, were, of course, a bit shaky. The moment our column came to a halt, these ranks broke up, stretching far beyond the church gates, curving at the ends, and threatening to outflank and even surround us.

Both Kuryazhites and Gorkytes maintained silence—the former out of sheer bewilderment, the latter owing to the discipline imposed by standing under the colours. Up to now the Kuryazhites had only seen our colonists in the advance detachment, always in working clothes, exhausted, dusty, and unwashed. Now they were confronted by the regular lines of grave, calm faces, gleaming belt buckles, and smart shorts above sunburned legs.

I endeavoured by almost superhuman concentration to seize and fix in my consciousness, in the fraction of a second the underlying significance of the expressions on the Kuryazh faces, but was unable to do this. It was no longer the drab, featureless crowd of my first day at Kuryazh. As my gaze wandered from group to group it kept encountering fresh expressions, some of them exceedingly unexpected. Very few adopted an indifferent, neutral pose. Most of the younger ones were openly enthusiastic, just as they would have been about a toy which they wanted to get into their hands, a toy too exquisite to excite envy or stimulate vanity. Nisinov and Zoren stood with their arms round one another, regarding the Gorkytes; resting their heads on one another's shoulders, they seemed to be dreaming, perhaps of the time when they, too, would take their places in these entrancing ranks, and be admiringly regarded by small outsiders like themselves. There were many faces marked by the grave concentration which is sometimes the unexpected effect of muscles in agitation, and eyes seeking a convenient place to rest on. These faces were the seat of violent emotions—in a split second they volunteered certain information, expressing approval, satisfaction, doubt, and envy in rapid succession. But the sarcastic countenances, got ready in advance,

the sneering, scornful expressions—these were dissolving gradually. As soon as the owners of such countenances heard the distant rolling of our drums, they thrust their hands into the pockets, and fell into patronizing, slouching poses. Many of them were conquered on the spot by the splendid chests and biceps of the first of the Gorkyites—Fedorenko, Koryto, Nechitailo—whose figures made their own shrink into insignificance. Others were troubled later, when it became all too obvious that the very least of these hundred and twenty champions could not be touched with impunity. And the smallest of all—Vanka Sinenky—stood in front, his bugle at his knee, his eyes radiating a fearless spirit that seemed to indicate, not yesterday's street arab, but some travelling princeling, behind whom stood, as if rooted to the spot, the generous escort with which his royal father had provided him.

This silent regard only lasted for a matter of seconds, I needed to destroy at a single blow the seven-metre distance between the two camps, and their mutual examination of one another.

"Comrades!" I cried. "From this moment all of us—four hundred persons—are one collective, the name of which is the Gorky Labour Colony. You must none of you ever forget that for a moment, each of you must consider himself a Gorkyte, and regard another Gorkyte as his closest comrade and best friend, whom he is bound to respect, defend, and help in every way, should he need help, and correct, should he err. Our discipline will be very strict. We need discipline, for our task is a hard one, and we have much to do. And we shan't be able to do it well without discipline."

I went on to tell them of the problems confronting us; I told them that we must get rich, that we must study, that we must clear a path for ourselves and for future Gorkytes, that we must learn to live like true proletarians, and leave the colony true Komsomols, in order, outside the colony, too, to build up and strengthen the proletarian state.

I was astonished by the unexpected attention paid to my words by the Kuryazhites. It was the Gorkytes who listened somewhat absent-mindedly, perhaps because my words had not revealed anything new to them,

all this being firmly rooted in the very fibres of their beings.

But how was it that a fortnight ago these same Kuryazhites had turned a deaf ear to appeals from me which had been so much more passionate and convincing? What a difficult science this pedagogics is! Surely it was not just because I was supported by the Gorky legions, or because the banner in its satin cover rose motionless and stern over the right flank, that they now listened to me! Surely this could not be the reason—for such an explanation would have run counter to all the axioms and theorems of pedagogics!

I ended up by announcing that there would be a general meeting of the Gorky Colony in half an hour, and that in the intervening half hour the colonists would have time to get acquainted with one another, shake hands, and come together to the meeting. And now we would, in our usual way, carry our banner into the building.

“Break ranks!”

My expectations that the Gorkytes would approach the Kuryazhites, and shake hands all around, were not fulfilled. They flew out of the ranks like buckshot, and rushed headlong for the dormitories, clubs and workshops. The Kuryazhites, not taking offence at this lack of attention, rushed after them. Korotkov alone stood among his adherents, and seemed to be discussing something with them. Bregel and Comrade Zoya were sitting on tombstones beside the wall of the church. I went up to them.

“Your boys are regular dandies,” said Bregel.

“But are the dormitories ready for them?” asked Comrade Zoya.

“We’ll manage without dormitories,” I replied, and hastily turned my attention to a new phenomenon.

Escorted by the members of Stupitsyn’s detachment, our herd of pigs was just entering the monastery gate with a slow, ponderous step. It was in three groups: the sows came first, then the youngsters, and the heavy fathers brought up the rear. Smiling from ear to ear, Volokhov went out to meet them with his lieutenants, while Denis Kudlaty was already affectionately scratching behind the ear of our general favourite, the five-months-old Cham-

berlain, named in facetious commemoration of the famous ultimatum presented by that statesman.

The herd was driven to sheds specially prepared for them, just as Stupitsyn, Sherre and Khalabuda, absorbed in the most engrossing conversation, entered the gates. Khalabuda was gesticulating with one arm, and with the other pressing to his bosom the smallest and pinkest of the piglings.

"And look at their pigs!" cried Khalabuda, coming up to our group. "If their people are half as good as their pigs, they'll do, let me tell you!"

Bregel rose from the tombstone, and said severely:

"I presume Comrade Makarenko thinks first of people."

"I doubt it," said Comrade Zoya, "for I see there is a place got ready for the pigs, and as for the children—they can manage."

Bregel seemed suddenly struck by such an unusual state of affairs.

"Zoya's remark is very apt," she said. "It would be worth hearing what Comrade Makarenko has to say about it—Makarenko the pedagogue, not Makarenko the pig breeder, of course."

While amazed at the unconcealed hostility of this utterance, I was unwilling to spoil a day like this by answering with equal rudeness.

"Permit me to reply collectively, so to speak, to these two authorities?" I asked Khalabuda.

"With pleasure!"

"The colonists, you see, are the masters here, and the pigs are their charges."

"And which are you?" asked Bregel, not looking at me.

"I suppose I'm nearer to the masters."

"But there's a bedroom for you, I suppose."

"I'll manage without a bedroom, too."

Bregel twitched her shoulders in irritation.

"Let's put an end to this conversation," she said coldly, turning to Comrade Zoya. "Comrade Makarenko likes carrying things to extremes."

Khalabuda laughed loudly.

"What's wrong with that? He's quite right—why shouldn't things be carried to extremes?"

I smiled involuntarily, causing Zoya to fall upon me once again. "I don't know whether you call it witty for pig breeding to be held up as a model for educating human beings," she said.

Comrade Zoya started the engines of her wrath, and her bulging eyes seemed to pierce my very being at the rate of twenty thousand revolutions per second. I was quite alarmed. But just then Sinenky, rosy-faced and excited, came running up with his bugle, chirping at much the same velocity:

"Lapot says . . . but Koval, he says: 'Wait!' And Lapot's cross, and says: 'Do as you're told, that's all!' . . . and then he said: 'If you drag this thing out. . . ' and the boys, too, they . . . and oh, what dormitories, oh, oh! And the boys say we're not going to put up with it, and Koval says he'll ask you."

"I understand what the boys say, and what Koval says, but I can't understand what you want me to do."

Sinenky was abashed.

"I don't want you to do anything, but Lapot says. . . ."

"Well?"

"And Koval says—we must talk it over."

"Now what is it exactly that Lapot said? That's extremely important, Comrade Sinenky."

Sinenky was so delighted with the way I addressed him, that he failed to catch my meaning.

"Eh?"

"What did Lapot say?"

"Oh, yes! He said: 'Give the signal for a meeting'."

"That's what you should have told me in the first place."

"But I did!"

Comrade Zoya took Sinenky's rosy cheeks between her finger and thumb, so that his lips formed a pink rosette.

"What a sweet child!"

Sinenky tore himself away in displeasure from Zoya's caressing hands, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and squinted sulkily at Zoya.

"Child! I like that! Supposing I was to do that to you! I'm not a child, I'm not! I'm a colonist, I am!"

Khalabuda picked up Sinenky and his bugle without an effort.

"Well done, well done, upon my word! Still, you're just a piggy, you know!"

Sinenky accepted complacently the role conferred upon him—he had no objection to being called a piggy. This, too, did not escape Zoya.

"It appears pig is the most honourable title here."

"That'll do!" said Khalabuda shortly, and set Sinenky down.

A heated argument appeared to be imminent; it was only averted by the approach of Koval, with Lapot following on his heels.

Koval, who had a rustic awe of authorities, winked at me from behind Bregel's shoulder, hoping to induce me to step aside and have a talk. But Lapot stood in no awe of authorities.

"Koval, here, thought he'd find a feather bed provided for him. But I consider there's no point in putting things off. We'll have the meeting at once, and read them our declaration."

Koval flushed at being forced to speak in front of the authorities, and women authorities at that, whom, in his heart he considered a very second-rate sort, but he insisted on stating his position.

"What do I want with your feather beds? And stop your nonsense! What I want to know is—can we force them to obey our declaration? And if so, how are we to set about it? How are we to get hold of them—by their collars? By the front of their shirts?"

Koval glanced nervously at Bregel, but it was from the other side that the danger threatened.

"The fronts of their shirts?" repeated Comrade Zoya in alarm.

"Oh, that's just my way of speaking," said Koval, reddening still more. "What do I care about their shirts, confound them? I'll go tomorrow to the Town Committee—let them send me back to the country!"

"You said just now: 'We'll force them.' How d'you mean to force them?"

In his vexation, Koval suddenly lost his awe of authority, and went to the other extreme, emitting a stream of half-inarticulate invectives, in the course of which "women's chatter" was sent to the devil. He then turned

aside and strode towards the club, grinding the last remnants of the monastery's brick walks into the soil with his dusty boot.

Lapot turned to Zoya, flinging out his arms helplessly:

"I'll tell you what forcing them means. It means—it means—well, it just means forcing them...."

"You see! You see!" cried Comrade Zoya, leaping to her feet, and confronting Bregel. "Now what have you to say?"

"Sinenky, give the signal for a meeting," I said.

Sinenky snatched his bugle from the hands of Khalabuda, pointed it towards the crosses on the dome of the church, and shattered the silence with a precise, terrifying staccato. Comrade Zoya clapped her hands to her ears.

"Oh, Lord! These bugles! Commanders! Barracks!"

"Never mind!" said Lapot. "The point is you understood what it meant!"

"A bell would be much nicer," protested Bregel gently.

"Oh, no! Not a bell! A bell's just a stupid—it always says the same thing. But that was a sensible signal—it means 'general meeting.' And there's one for commanders' meeting, and another for 'last post.' And then there's the alarm! Oho! If Vanya here was to sound the alarm it would be enough to raise the dead—you'd come running!"

Groups of colonists converged upon the club from behind annexes, sheds, and church walls. The younger ones kept breaking into a run, but were continually being held up by all sorts of chance impressions. Gorkytes and Kuryazhites were already mingling, and here and there conversations of an obviously instructive nature were being carried on, but the majority of the Kuryazhites still held themselves aloof.

Everyone crowded into the cool, empty club-room, but the white shirts of the Gorkytes were conspicuous in the vicinity of the altar-dais, and I realized that this had been done on the instructions of Taranets, who was evidently determined to have his forces concentrated in case of necessity.

The numerical weakness of the Gorky side was mercilessly revealed, for the second, third, and tenth detachments were busy settling the livestock into their new quarters, and there were still twenty-five persons, not count-

ing the whole *Rabfak* contingent, with Osadchy at the Ryzhov station. This left only about fifty Gorkyites among the four hundred present at the meeting, not counting our girls, who had been received by the Kuryazh girls with touching affection, kisses and words of welcome, and assigned places in the latter's dormitory, set in order by Olga Lapova with the most loving care.

Before declaring the meeting open, Zhorka Volkov asked me in a whisper:

"Shall we go straight ahead?"

"Go straight ahead!"

Zhorka ascended the altar-dais and prepared to read what we jokingly called our "declaration." This was a resolution passed by our Komsomol organization, a resolution to the making of which Zhorka, Volokhov, Kudlaty, Zhevily, and Gorkovsky had contributed an endless fund of initiative and wit, combining the broad Russian outlook and calculations worthy of a Yankee with a generous pinch of our own Gorkyite pepper, comradely love, and affectionate, comradely cruelty, thrown in for good measure.

The "declaration" had so far been considered a "secret document," although any number of people had taken part in the discussion of it—it had been discussed again and again at meetings of the Bureau in Kuryazh, and checked and gone over again with Koval and our Komsomol during my return to the colony.

Zhorka said a few introductory words:

"Comrade Colonists! We won't waste time beating about the bush! Only I don't know where to begin, confound it! I'd better just read you the resolution of the Komsomol organization, and you'll see for yourselves where we have to begin, and how everything will go. You don't work, now, and you're not Komsomols, or Pioneers. Confound you, you just wallow in dirt, and I'd like to know what it is you are! What light are we to regard you in? Simply in the light of a food-centre for bugs, lice, cockroaches, fleas, and vermin of all sorts!"

"Is that our fault?" shouted someone.

Zhorka took up the challenge with alacrity.

"Of course it is! It's your fault—your very own fault! What right have you to grow up into drones and whiners and rotters? No earthly right! You have no right, and

that's all about it! And look at the dirt! Who has the right to live in such filth? We wash our pigs every week with soap, you ought to see us! D'you think there's a single pig that doesn't want to be washed, or that says: 'Get the hell out of here with your soap!'? Nothing of the sort! They bow, and say 'thank you!' And you—you haven't had a bit of soap for months!"

"Nobody gave us any!" cried someone from the crowd, obviously stung to the quick.

Zhorka's round face, still bearing the blue marks inflicted during his nocturnal encounter with the class foe, seemed to darken and lengthen.

"And whose business is it to give you soap? *You're* the masters, here! *You* ought to decide what you need yourselves!"

"And who's your master—Makarenko?" asked somebody, who immediately hid himself in the crowd.

Heads were turned in the direction of the voice, but in the place where it had come from there was nothing to be seen but the circles made by the turning heads, while a few countenances in the middle of the hall registered satisfied sneers.

Zhorka smiled broadly.

"Aren't you a set of silly asses? We trust Anton Semyonovich, because he's one of us, and we all work together. Whichever of you put that question is a silly ass! But never mind, we'll teach even silly asses like him. A chap like that can do nothing but look round and bleat: 'Where's my master?'"

The hall echoed to an outburst of laughter. Zhorka's imitation of a blank-faced ragamuffin looking everywhere for his master was irresistibly funny.

Zhorka continued:

"In the Soviet land the proletarian and the worker are the masters, but you—you've been living on state-provided food, and all you could do was to mess up the ground under you. You have about as much political consciousness as an owl!"

I was beginning to feel uneasy—was not Zhorka being too hard on the Kuryazhites? Would it not have been better to handle them a little more gently? And just then the same elusive voice cried:

"Let's see what sort of a mess *you'll* make!"

A wave of subdued, malicious laughter swept over the hall, accompanied by comprehending, satisfied smiles.

"You can do that, if you like," said Zhorka with grave cordiality. "I can put an armchair next to the toilet, and you can sit there and look. It'll be very good for you, you don't even know how to use the toilet. It's no great art, but everyone has to acquire it."

The Kuryazhites reddened, but they could not help laughing, holding on to one another, and rocking with pleasure. The girls squealed, and turned their backs to the platform, to show the orator that he had offended their susceptibilities. The Gorkytes alone, gazing at Zhorka with modest pride, repressed their smiles out of delicacy.

Having laughed their fill, the Kuryazhites directed at Zhorka glances which were a great deal warmer and more hospitable than before, as if what they had just heard from him was really quite an acceptable and useful programme.

A programme is of vital importance in the life of a human being. The veriest nitwit, when confronted, not by vague tracts of land, varied only by hillocks, ravines, swamps and tussocks, but by the merest indication of a route to be followed will begin to look ahead more cheerfully. Be this route just a path, or a road complete with turnings, bridges, wayside plantations, and signposts, it will stimulate him to plan definite stages for his own activities. Nature herself begins to make more sense in his eyes, for now there is a left side, and a right side, a longer and a shorter way.

We had deliberately weighed the importance of any outlook whatsoever, even one containing not a pinch of spice or an ounce of sweetness, and it was in this spirit that the declaration of the Komsomol organization, which Zhorka at last began to read to the meeting, had been drawn up.

"Resolution passed by the L.Y.C.L. Nucleus of the Gorky Labour Colony, 15th May, 1926:

"1. To consider all detachments of original Gorkytes, as also those at Kuryazh, as disbanded, and to organize

immediately twenty new detachments, having the following membership."

(Here Zhorka read out a list of the colonists in each detachment, giving the names of commanders separately.)

"2. Comrade Lapot to remain Secretary of the Commanders' Council; Denis Kudlaty to be supply manager, and Alexei Volkov—storekeeper.

"3. The Commanders' Council is required to see that all points of the present resolution are carried out, and to hand over the colony in perfect order to the representatives of the People's Commissariat for Education, and the District Executive Committee, on the Day of the First Sheaf, to be duly celebrated.

"4. All clothing, underwear, bed linen, blankets, mattresses, towels, etc., personal as well as state property, to be taken from members of the former Kuryazh Colony immediately, disinfected the same day, and later put into repair.

"5. To issue to all colonists shorts and sport shirts made by the girls of the original Gorky Colony, second sets to be issued in a week's time, when the first are sent to the wash.

"6. All colonists, with the exception of girl members, to have their hair cropped close, immediately after which they will receive velvet skullcaps.

"7. All colonists to bathe today, wherever they can, the laundry to be left at the disposal of the girls.

"8. All detachments to sleep out-of-doors, under bushes, or wherever they like, subject to the approval of commanders, pending completion of repairs and equipment of new dormitories in the old school.

"9. Detachments to sleep on mattresses, blankets, and pillows brought from original Gorky Colony, these to be shared by members of detachments without any argument, or grumbling as to their insufficiency.

"10. No complaints or grumbling to be made that there is nowhere to sleep, but reasonable solutions of the problem to be reached.

"11. Colonists to dine by detachments in two shifts, and no moving from one detachment to another to be permitted.

"12. The utmost attention to be paid to cleanliness.

"13. No work to be done in workshops other than the tailoring shop until August 1st, and all work to be done on the following assignments:

"The breaking up of the wall round the monastery, and the building of a hoghouse for three hundred pigs from the bricks.

"The painting of all window frames, doors, railings, and bedsteads.

"Work in fields and truck garden.

"The repairing of furniture.

"The cleaning up of the yard and all slopes of the hill, the laying of paths, digging of flower beds, and making of a hothouse.

"The making of a good suit of clothes for each colonist, and the purchase of boots for the winter, till such time all colonists to go barefoot.

"The cleaning of the pond so as to make it possible to bathe in it.

"The making of a new garden on the southern slope of the hill.

"The preparation of lathes, materials, and tools for use in the workshops from August 1st."

For all its apparent simplicity, the declaration produced an enormous impression on everybody. It even amazed us, its authors, by its austere precision, and exacting tone. Moreover, and this was particularly noted by the Kuryazhites, it immediately made it apparent to all that our passive behaviour previous to the arrival of the Gorkyites had been a mask for firm intentions and secret preparations, with due consideration of all available data.

The new detachments had been brilliantly picked by the Komsomols. The combined genius of Zhorka, Gorkovsky, and Zhevely, had enabled them to distribute the Kuryazhites in the various detachments with the utmost precision, taking into consideration the ties of friendship, the abysses of enmity, individual dispositions, tendencies, aspirations and idiosyncrasies. It was not for nothing that Advance Mixed had spent a fortnight going round the dormitories.

The original Gorkyites were distributed with equal conscientiousness—the strong and the weak, the energetic

and the languid, the austere and the gay, real human beings, and approximates to that category—all found their places in accordance with sundry considerations.

The energetic clauses of the declaration came as a surprise even to many of the original Gorkyites, and the Kuryazhites were completely bowled over by Zhorka's recital. During the reading of the declaration some of the listeners asked their neighbours to repeat a word that had escaped them, while others, standing on tiptoe, glanced behind them in astonishment, and, at a particularly strong passage, an amazed "oho!" was heard. When Zhorka came to an end there was silence in the hall, but it was a silence throbbing with unvoiced questions: What are we to do? Shall we submit, protest, riot? Applaud, laugh, or curse?

Zhorka modestly folded up the sheet of paper. Lapot's eyes, beneath the puffy lids, swept with ironic attention over the crowd, his mouth widening in a caustic grin.

"I don't like that! I'm an old Gorkyite! I'm used to my own bed and bedding, my own blanket! And now I've got to sleep under a bush! And where is it—that bush? Kudlaty, you're my commander—tell me where that bush is!"

"I've had my eye on one for you for ever so long!"

"Does anything grow on that bush? Perhaps it's a cherry tree, or an apple tree! I hope there'll be nightingales. . . . Are there any nightingales, Kudlaty?"

"There aren't any nightingales yet, but there are sparrows."

"Sparrows? Personally I'm not very fond of sparrows. Their singing's rotten, and they're so careless, you know. You might at least throw in a goldfinch, or something."

"All right, you shall have a goldfinch," said Kudlaty, laughing.

"And then—" Lapot looked round as if for commiseration. "Our detachment's the third, isn't it? Let's have a look at the list! M-m-m-m-m. . . . The third . . . there are one, two, three . . . eight old Gorkyites in it. So there'll be eight blankets, eight pillows, and eight mattresses, and there are twenty-two chaps in the detachment. I don't like that much! Whom have we here? Well, now—Stegny! Where's Stegny? Raise your hand! Come on over here with you! Come on, come on, don't be afraid!"

On to the altar-dais there clambered a lad who looked as if he had neither washed nor had his hair cut since the Stone Age. He had sun-bleached hair, and his natural complexion, sunburn, and dirt had become blended on his cheeks in a complex layer already beginning to show cracks. Stegny, obviously embarrassed, stepped on to the dais with dirt-encrusted feet, grinning awkwardly, and confronting the crowd with a slow gaze and teeth of dazzling whiteness.

"So you're the one I'm to share a blanket with! I hope you don't kick too violently!"

Bubbles of saliva formed on Stegny's lips. Ashamed of his black fist, he checked the impulse to wipe them away with his hand, and rubbed his mouth on the hem of his incredibly long and ragged shirt.

"I d-d-on't...."

"That's a good thing! But tell me, Comrade Stegny, what shall we do if it rains?"

"Run away, hee-hee!"

"But where shall we run to?"

After a moment's thought, Stegny brought out the words:

"How do I know?"

Lapot cast an anxious glance at Denis.

"Denis, where are we to go if it rains?"

Denis stepped forward, narrowing his eyes with an air of Ukrainian cunning as he looked at his audience.

"I don't know what the other commanders intend doing in this case," he said, "and to tell the truth it seems to have been overlooked in the declaration, but I can tell you this—if it should rain, or anything, the third detachment has nothing to fear. The river's quite near, and I shall just lead the detachment to the river. Once you're in the river the rain can't hurt you, and if you choose to dive you won't feel a drop. It's quite safe, and extremely hygienic."

Denis looked innocently at Lapot, and turned aside. Lapot, as if suddenly beside himself with rage, shouted at Stegny, who seemed to be lost in contemplation of so many extraordinary events.

"D'you hear—you?"

"I hear," said Semyon blithely.

"Look out then! We'll sleep together on my blanket, confound you! But first I'm going to give you a good scrubbing in the river there, and clip your wool for you. D'you understand?"

"I understand," smiled Stegny.

Lapot threw off the simpleton's mask he had assumed, and moved nearer to the edge of the dais.

"Everything quite clear?"

"Quite clear!" came the reply from several places.

"Very well, then, since everything's clear, we'll speak out. This resolution, of course, is not exactly a pleasant one. But our general meeting has got to pass it—there's no other way out."

He made a despairing gesture, and said in a tear-strangled voice:

"Take the vote, Zhorka!"

The meeting rocked with laughter. Zhorka raised his hand.

"I'm going to take the vote. All in favour of our resolution, raise your hands!"

A forest of hands was raised. I sent an intent gaze up and down the ranks of the vast forces under my charge. All voted, even the Korotkov group around the door. The girls raised their palms with tender solemnity, smiling, their heads on one side. I was amazed—what had made the Korotkov bunch vote for the resolution? Korotkov himself stood leaning against the wall, patiently holding up his hand, his fine eyes turned calmly upon our people on the platform.

The solemnity of this moment was somewhat marred by the sudden appearance of Borovoy, who came stumbling over the threshold in the highest of spirits, causing the huge accordion in his hands to emit a deafening roar.

"Aha!" he shouted. "The masters have come! Wait a minute, now ... I'll play you a welcome—I know one!"

Korotkov brought his hand down on Borovoy's shoulder, signalling something to him with a significant glance. Borovoy threw back his head and fell silent, but still held his accordion ready for action—at any moment the music could be expected to break out.

Zhorka declared the result of the voting.

"In favour of the resolution of the Komsomol organiza-

tion—three hundred and fifty-four votes. Against—none. So we may consider that it has been passed unanimously.”

The Gorkyites clapped, exchanging smiling glances, and the Kuryazhites seized with rapture upon a form of expression so novel to them, and, perhaps for the first time since the founding of the monastery, the domed roof echoed to the blithe sound of a human collective applauding. The younger ones clapped long, with extended fingers, now raising their hands above their heads, now holding them close to one ear, and went on clapping till at last Zadorov stepped on to the dais.

I had not noticed his arrival. He had apparently brought something from Ryzhov, for his face and clothes were adorned with patches of white. As ever, he conveyed to me the suggestion of immaculate cleanliness, and frank, simple joy. And here, too, before addressing the meeting, he bestowed upon it his enchanting smile.

“I want to say a few words, friends. So here goes! I’m the very first Gorkyite, the oldest of them all, and at one time the worst of them all. Anton Semyonovich probably remembers that very well. And now I’m a student of the Technological Institute. So you listen to me—you’ve just passed a fine resolution, a grand one, I tell you, but believe me it’s a hard one—oh, it’s a hard one!”

He shook his head as if oppressed by the hardness of the resolution. Affectionate laughter resounded through the hall.

“But hard or not, you’ve passed it. And since you’ve passed it, that’s that! You must remember that. Perhaps somebody is thinking now—we can pass it, and we’ll see about carrying it out when the time comes. Anybody who thinks that, isn’t a human being, he’s a rat! By our law there’s only one way out for anyone who doesn’t obey a resolution of the general meeting, and that’s out of the door—he can go!”

Zadorov closed his whitened lips tightly, and raised his clenched fist above his head.

“Out with him!” he said harshly, and let his fist fall.

The crowd fell silent, awaiting fresh terrors, but Karabanov was pushing his way through it, he, too, smeared all over, but this time with something black. In the astonished silence ensuing Karabanov asked:

"Who's got to be turned out? I'll do it in a jiffy!"

"He meant it in general," said Lapot blandly.

"I can do it in general and in any way you like," said Karabanov. "But why are you all sticking around here looking as dismal as village priests at a fair?"

"We're all right!" cried a voice.

"Oh, you are, are you? Why those drooping heads then? Where's the music?"

"Here it is, here's the music!" cried Borovoy delightedly, and he made his accordion give a short bark.

"Oh, so there *is* music! Come on, now, form a circle! Come on, you girls, stop warming your sides by the stove! Who can dance the hopak? Natalka, my love! Look, what a lass our Natalka is, lads!"

The boys gazed with alacrity at the clear roguish eyes of Natasha Petrenko, at her long braids, and the slanting tooth revealed by her glowing smile.

"So it's a hopak you want, comrades, is it?" inquired Borovoy, with the subtle smile of a virtuoso, and once more his accordion emitted a loud bark.

"And what do you want?"

"I can play a waltz, or a step dance, or a Spanish dance—I can play anything!"

"We'll have the step dance afterwards, Pa—now give us a hopak!"

Smiling indulgently at the simplicity of Karabanov's choreographical tastes, Borovoy, his head on one side, thought for a moment, and, elongating his instrument with an abrupt gesture, struck up a skittish, staccato dance tune, with a character all its own. Karabanov flung out his arms, dropping simultaneously into the squatting position for the Ukrainian dance, and began shooting his legs backwards and forwards in delirious abandon. Natasha's eyelashes fluttered for a moment over her blushing cheeks and rested there. With never a glance at anyone, she glided over the floor like a boat escaping from its moorings, setting into motion ever so slightly the pressed folds of her full skirt. Semyon struck a groan from the boards with his heel, and plunged all round Natasha with an arrogant smile, his swiftly-tapping heels resounding through the room, his eloquent legs whirling with such bewildering rapidity that there seemed to be dozens of legs shooting

back and forwards, and not just one pair. Natasha raised her lashes, and shot that glance at her partner which girls reserve specially for the hopak, and which, being interpreted, means: "You're a good-looking lad, and you know how to dance—but look out, beware!"

Borovoy gingered up his music, Semyon finally warmed up, Natasha gave rein to her pleasure, her skirt no longer swaying slightly, but spinning around her legs in eddying folds. The Kuryazhites widened their circle, hastily wiped their noses on their sleeves, and set up an excited twittering. The throbbing notes of the accordion, the dynamic motion of the hopak spread in widening circles throughout the room, forcing the heady rhythm of the music up to the vaulted ceiling.

And suddenly a pair of hands stretched out from the very heart of the crowd, carelessly cleaving the unresisting flood, and Perets, arms akimbo, insinuated himself into the whirlpool of the dance, shooting out his feet, and winking at Natasha. Natasha, serenely kind, swept a glance from half-closed eyes over Perets's face, twitched a snowy embroidered sleeve under his very nose, and suddenly broke out into a smile of simple friendliness, the smile of a wise and comprehending friend, of a Komsomol, extending to Perets a helping hand.

Perets could not stand out against such a glance. For the space of one endless moment he glanced round uneasily, then, as if lowering all his internal defences he suddenly leapt wildly into the air, flung his ancient cap on to the floor, and threw himself into the whirlpool. Semyon grinned broadly, Natasha seemed to sweep past the faces of the Kuryazhites still more rapidly. Perets performed some steps of his own invention—humorous, mocking, with a hint of the underworld and its ways.

Then it was that my glance sought—and found—Korotkov. He was narrowing his wary eyes, scarcely perceptible shadows flitting from his white forehead to his quivering lips. He cleared his throat, looked round, encountered my steady gaze, and suddenly began to make his way towards me. While still separated from me by one of the onlookers, he extended a hand, saying huskily:

"Anton Semyonovich, I haven't said how d'you do to you today."

"How d'you do!" I rejoined, smiling and watching his eyes.

He turned his face towards the dance, forced himself to look at me again, gave a jerk of the head, and said, in a voice which he intended to make cheerful, but which remained obstinately husky:

"Can't they dance, just—the sons-of-bitches!"

9

CONVERSION

The process of conversion began immediately after the general meeting, and took three hours—a record figure for any sort of conversion.

As soon as Zhorka waved his hand as a sign that the meeting was closed, a hubbub arose in the club. Standing on tiptoe, commanders yelled at the top of their voices, summoning the members of their detachments. A score of eddying streams began to be formed in the room, and for a few moments these streams, now meeting, now crossing each other, rushed wildly about within the walls of the ancient church. The various detachments met in separate corners, beside the stoves, in niches in the wall, and right out on the floor, each consisting of a dingy grey crowd of ragamuffins, in the midst of which the white shoulders of the Gorkytes moved about without haste.

Then the colonists poured out of the club into the yard, and made for the dormitories. Five minutes later silence reigned both in the club and the yard, only broken every now and then by some Mercury on a special errand from his detachment, flying by with fluttering heels.

I could enjoy a breathing-space.

I went up to the group of women on the church steps, in order to watch the development of events from this altitude. I wanted nothing but respite from speech and thought. Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Lydochka, happy and relieved, were languidly and ineffectually beating off the questions of Comrade Zoya. Bregel was leaning against the dusty railing of the steps, and saying to Gulyaeva:

"I see that all this display is creating an impression of order. But what of it? It's purely superficial."

Gulyaeva glanced round at me.

"Anton Semyonovich, *you* answer! I don't understand such matters."

"I'm not much of a dab at theory myself," I replied reluctantly.

No one spoke, and this enabled me to snatch at an infinitesimal moment of rest, to look around me and observe that marvellous thing we call the world. It was about two o'clock. On the other side of the pond the thatched roofs of the village lay basking in the sunshine. Calm white cloudlets lay motionless over Kuryazh, looking as if they had been put there by special order—cloud-reserves to be drawn upon in case of necessity.

I knew what was going on in the colony at the moment. The boys were folding up the beds in the dormitories, beating straw out of mattresses and pillows, and tying everything up in bundles. Blankets, sheets, boots old and new—all went into the bundles. In the cartshed Alyosha Volkov was receiving all this rubbish, registering it, and sending it to the disinfecting chamber. The disinfecting chamber had been sent from town. It was on wheels. It was working on the threshing floor, where Denis Kudlaty was in command. On the steps on the other side of the church Dmitri Zhevely, list of names in his hand, was issuing new clothing and soap to detachment commanders, or their deputies.

Suddenly Sinenky, weighed down with responsibility, came fluttering round the corner of the church wall.

"Taranets says I'm to give the signal for a commanders' meeting in the dining room," he said hurriedly, gesturing with his bugle.

"Go ahead, then."

Sinenky rustled invisible wings, and fluttered off to the door of the dining room. Standing on the threshold, he repeated several times a brief signal, composed of three notes.

Bregel, who had been regarding Sinenky with interest, turned to me, saying:

"Why does that boy keep asking for your permission to give those—er—signals? It's such a trifle, after all!"

"It's our rule—I must be informed of any signal not in the schedule. I have to know."

"Of course that's all quite, what shall I say?—impressive. But it's all just display. Don't you agree?"

I began to get angry. Why must they all pester me on such a day? Besides, what were they getting at? Could it be that they regretted the old Kuryazh Colony?

"All your banners and drums and salutes—they only organize the young superficially."

I was longing to say: "Shut up!", but contented myself with a rather more courteous reply.

"You seem to regard the young, or shall we say, the child, as a kind of box. There's the outside of it, the packing material, I suppose, and the inside—the entrails. You seem to think we should pay attention to nothing but the entrails, and yet, if it's not properly packed all those precious entrails will be lost."

Bregel followed with angry eyes the figure of Vetkovsky, running towards the dining room.

"Whatever you say, it's all very like a military training school."

"Look here, Varvara Victorovna," I said, as politely as I could, "let's put an end to this discussion. It's no good us talking without...."

"Without what?"

"Without an interpreter."

The massive grey form of Bregel detached itself heavily from the railing and bore down upon me. I clenched my fists behind my back, but she merely fished up a forced smile from somewhere about the region of her collar, fixing it on to her face with the leisurely movement of a short-sighted person putting on his glasses.

"Interpreters will be found, Comrade Makarenko!"

"Then let's wait till they are!"

The first detachment was approaching us from the gate, and Gud, its commander, casting a rapid glance at the church steps, asked loudly:

"You say this door is never used, Ustimenko?"

Ustimenko, a dark-skinned lad of about fifteen, pointed to the door.

"No, no, they never use this door, I tell you! It's always locked. They use that one, and that one, but this one they never use. You can believe me!"

"They have cupboards in the middle there. Candles and suchlike..." said a voice from behind.

Gud ran up the steps, balanced himself on the top one, and laughed.

"What could be better? Oho! It'll be splendid here! They don't need such a fine porch here. And there's a roof, if it rains. It's rather hard for lying on, though. Perhaps not so very hard, eh?"

Karpinsky, an old Gorkyte, and veteran shoemaker from Gud's detachment, looked gaily at the stone paving of the porch.

"It's not a bit hard. We have six mattresses, and six blankets. And perhaps we could get some more."

"We might," said Gud.

He turned towards the pond, and then made the following announcement:

"Be it known to all! This porch has been taken by the first detachment. And that's that! Anton Semyonovich, you'll bear witness to it."

"All right!"

"So we can make a start. Let's see who's here! Wait a minute!"

Gud drew a list out of his pocket.

"Sliva and Khlebchenko—let's have a look at you!"

Khlebchenko turned out to be small, lean, and pale. His straight black hair stuck out horizontally over his forehead, and his nose was covered with black specks. His filthy shirt reached to his knees, and, in places where the hem was torn, still lower. He smiled awkwardly, looking over his shoulder. Gud regarded him with a critical eye, which he then turned upon Sliva. Sliva was just as thin, pale and ragged as Khlebchenko, but he was a very tall boy. His narrow head was balanced on the thinnest of necks, and his lips were remarkable for their thickness and redness. Sliva stood smiling patiently, his gaze fixed on the steps.

"God knows what they've been feeding you on, here," said Gud. "Why are you all so skinny?... You're as lean as stray dogs. The detachment will have to be fed up, Anton Semyonovich. D'you call that a detachment? We can't have a first detachment looking like that. We simply can't! There's enough food, isn't there? Very well, then. I suppose you know how to put the grub away!"

There was laughter in the detachment. Gud once again

glanced dubiously at the faces of Sliva and Khlebchenko, saying caressingly:

"Listen, duckies, Sliva and Khlebchenko! This porch must be washed clean—this moment! D'you know what washing is done with? With water! And water must be poured into a pail. Karpinsky—on your toes! Ask Mitka for our floorcloth and bucket. And a besom!"

He turned to Sliva and Khlebchenko.

"D'you know how to wash a floor?"

Sliva and Khlebchenko nodded. Gud turned towards us, pulled off his cap, and made a sweeping gesture with his arm.

"We must apologize, dear comrades, but this territory has been occupied by the first detachment, and it can't be helped. In view of the fact that there's going to be a grand clean-up here, I will show you a nice place, where there are benches for you to sit on. But this place belongs to the first detachment."

The first detachment followed this chivalrous procedure with intense admiration. I thanked Gud for the nice place with benches, but declined to make use of it.

Karpinsky ran up with clattering buckets. Gud issued final instructions, and waved his hand cheerfully.

"And now for the haircutting!"

Descending the church steps Bregel followed the movement of her own feet with silent attention. I was longing for my guests to take their departure as speedily as possible.

In front of the very porch on which Zhevely had opened his "shop," representatives from detachments and their assistants were now lining up, and "porters" were heaving on to their shoulders blue stacks of shorts and white stacks of shirts, lifting clattering buckets, and holding brown boxes of soap beneath their armpits. Here also was drawn up the Fiat car of the District Executive Committee, from which the bored, drowsy chauffeur glanced wistfully at Bregel.

We walked down to the gate in silence. I had no idea where to go. If I had been alone I would have flung myself down on the grass beside the church wall, and continued to contemplate the world in all its seductive

detail. The present operations would take about two hours, and then there would be plenty for me to do. In a word I thoroughly sympathized with the melancholy chauffeur.

But a lively, laughing, chattering group was just passing out of the gate and my heart grew light again. It was the eighth detachment, I knew, for in front of it I could make out the splendidly modelled figure of Fedorenko, and in its midst were Koryto, Nechitailo, Oleg Ognev. My glance rested with perplexity on certain unfamiliar figures, clad, as it seemed to me, unnaturally, in the Gorky costume. At last it dawned upon me that these were all former Kuryazhites, and that this was the conversion for which we had laboured a whole fortnight. Clean, washed faces, velvet skullcaps, still bearing the marks of their original folds, on newly-cropped boyish heads. And, most important and gratifying of all—the freshly-minted, gay, trustful glances, the newly-acquired grace of people in clean clothes, and free from vermin—many, perhaps, for the first time in their lives.

Fedorenko, with the slow dignity characteristic of him, stepped aside, saying, in his slightly ponderous baritone:

“Anton Semyonovich, you can accept Fedorenko’s eighth detachment in due, complete order.”

Beside him was Oleg Ognev, his long sensitive lips expanding, as he gave me a slight bow.

“The baptizing of these peoples had been accomplished not without my modest participation. In case some of my future actions are less worthy, you might jot this down in your notebook.”

I squeezed Oleg’s shoulders heartily, and this I did in response to an almost irresistible desire to embrace and kiss him and Fedorenko and all the rest of my splendid, my wonderful kids. I would have found it hard at that moment to make a note of anything in my heart, not to mention writing anything in a notebook. My heart was suddenly invaded by a rush of all sorts of ideas, considerations, images, solemn oratorios, and impatient dance rhythms. And scarcely had I caught hold of one of these, when it wriggled away from me in the crowd, and something new cried out to me, saucily calling attention to itself. “Baptism and conversion,” I said to myself as I

walked on, "these are religious expressions." But the smiling countenance of Korotkov instantaneously erased this brilliant generalization. Why, yes, I myself had insisted on the inclusion of Korotkov in the eighth detachment. That genius Fedorenko, seeing at a glance that my thoughts were on Korotkov, put his arm round Korotkov's shoulders, and said, his grey eyes quivering ever so slightly:

"You've given us a splendid colonist for the detachment, Anton Semyonovich. I've had a talk with him. He'll make a good commander one day."

Looking gravely into my eyes, Korotkov said genially:

"I should like to have a talk with you later on—may I?"

"You're a funny chap!" said Fedorenko, looking into Korotkov's face not without a certain gay irony. "What can there be to talk about? Talking's no use! Why do people have to talk?"

Korotkov returned the wily Fedorenko's look with interest.

"I have something special to say, you see."

"No, you haven't! Nonsense!"

"I want to be allowed to be put under arrest, too!"

Fedorenko burst out laughing.

"So *that's* what he wants! You're in a hurry, brother! You must win the title of colonist first—see this badge? You can't be arrested yet. If you were told: 'Put yourself under arrest!' you'd answer back. You'd say: 'What for? I haven't done anything!'"

"And if I really hadn't done anything?"

"You see! You don't understand! You think it's awfully important if you're wrongfully accused! But when you're a colonist, you'll look at things differently. How can I explain? You see, the great thing is discipline, and whether you've done anything, or haven't—that's not so awfully important. Is that right, Anton Semyonovich?"

I nodded to Fedorenko. Bregel gazed at us as if we were specimens in brine, and her cheeks assumed the character of dewlaps. I hastened to distract her attention from unpleasant matters by turning to Fedorenko.

"And what's that lot, over there? Who's that?"

"That's *that* little fellow," said Fedorenko. "A game little chap! They say he was badly beaten up."

"That's right," I said, "it's Zaichenko's detachment."

"Who beat him up?" asked Bregel.

"He was beaten up one night. People from here, of course."

"What for? Why did you not inform us? When did it happen?"

"Varvara Victorovna," I said severely. "Children have been maltreated here in Kuryazh for years and years. Since you took so little interest in this, I had grounds for supposing that this incident also was beneath your attention, especially as I myself took the deepest personal interest in it."

Bregel took my severe speech as an invitation to depart.

"Good-bye," she said coldly, and bent her steps towards the car out of which the head of Comrade Zoya was looking.

I drew a breath of relief, and went to meet Vanya Zaichenko and his eighteenth detachment.

Vanya led forth his detachment triumphantly. We had purposely put only Kuryazhites into the eighteenth detachment, so as to give both detachment and its commander an aura of special significance. And Vanya appreciated this. Fedorenko burst out into loud laughter.

"You little imps, you!"

The eighteenth detachment flaunted up in fine martial style. The twenty youngsters marched four abreast, keeping well in step, and even swinging their arms like real soldiers. How could that little Zaichenko have achieved such military perfection in so short a time? By way of bolstering up the military spirit of the eighteenth detachment, I raised my hand to the peak of my cap, with a smart:

"Greetings, comrades!"

But the eighteenth detachment was not prepared for such ways. The lads answered pellmell, and Vanka waved his hand in disgust.

"They're still just muzhiks!"

Fedorenko, enraptured, smote his knees.

"He's already learned! Just fancy!"

In order to relax the tensity a little, I cried:

"Eighteenth detachment, at ease! Tell us how you liked your wash!"

Pyotr Malikov smiled brightly.

"Our wash? It was fine! Wasn't it, Timka?"

Odaryuk, turning his head, said in subdued tones, muffled by somebody's shoulder:

"With soap."

Zaichenko looked at me with pride.

"We're going to wash with soap every day now! Our supply manager is Odaryuk. Look!"

He pointed to the brown box in the hands of Odaryuk.

"We used up two bars today—two whole bars! But that was the first time. We shan't use so much now. And we want to ask you something. Of course we're not going to whine. . . ."

Vanka turned to his followers.

"We're not going to whine, are we?" he repeated.

"You blessed little devils!" cried Fedorenko in ecstasy.

"We're not going to whine! We're not going to whine!" yelled the little fellows.

Vanya turned round several times in all directions.

"But still there's something we want to ask you, you know."

"All right! I understand. You're not whining, you're just asking me something."

Vanya drew himself up.

"That's right! We have something to ask you—there are old Gorkyites in all other detachments—three or four, anyhow. And we have none. Not one!"

As Vanya uttered the words "Not one!" his voice rose to a scream, and he flung an extended finger outwards from his right ear. Then he suddenly burst out laughing.

"Not one blanket! Not one! And not one mattress! Not one! Not one!"

Vanya laughed still more merrily, and the members of the eighteenth detachment laughed with him.

I gave the commander of the eighteenth detachment a note to Alyoshka Volkov: "Issue immediately six blankets and six mattresses."

There was a great stir and movement on the path to the river. The detachments of colonists moved along it as if taking part in manoeuvres.

Amidst the weeds behind the stables were stationed four hairdressers, who had arrived from the town that morn-

ing. The Kuryazh crust was scaling in lumps from the persons of the Kuryazhites, corroborating the opinion I had always maintained that the Kuryazhites would turn out to be just ordinary boys, a lively, garrulous, and altogether "joyous folk."

I saw the frank pleasure with which the lads regarded their new costumes, the unexpected foppishness with which they settled the folds of shirts, and turned the caps round and round in their hands. The ingenious Alyoshka Volkov, rummaging in the vast pile of articles of all sort dumped around the church, dragged to the surface our one and only looking glass, a full-length one, which was immediately set up on the altar-dais by two of the younger boys. And around this looking glass there formed a crowd of individuals eager to see what sort of a figure they cut in the world, and to admire their own reflections. There were a number of good-looking boys among the Kuryazhites, and for that matter the rest were destined to improve in appearance in a very short time, for beauty is but a by-product of work and feeding.

Things were particularly joyful with the girls. The Gorky girls had brought for the Kuryazh girls gay attire specially made for them: a skirt of navy-blue sateen, with one wide pleat, a blouse of good white material, light-blue socks, and what they called ballet shoes. Kudlaty allowed the girls' detachment to take the sewing machines into their dormitory, and the usual female orgy began: alterations, tryings on, fittings. We had given the Kuryazh laundry over to the girls for the day. Meeting Perets I had told him severely:

"Get into working clothes, and heat the boiler in the laundry for the girls. And no dawdling! Off with you—quick march!"

Perets stuck out his scratched countenance, smote his chest, and asked:

"You mean *I'm* to heat water for the girls?"

"Yes, I do!"

Perets stuck out his stomach, puffed out his cheeks, and saluting just like a soldier, bawled out in a voice that could be heard all over the monastery grounds:

"Heat water for the girls—very good!"

He was certainly energetic, even if he *was* a bit

awkward about it. But after this grandiose display he suddenly turned melancholy.

"Where am I to find working clothes? The ninth detachment hasn't had any issued yet."

"Listen, my child," I said to Perets. "Do you want me to take you by the hand, and show you how to change? Now then, how much longer do you intend to stand here chattering?"

The boys around us burst out laughing. Perets wagged his head and cried out without the slightest formality:

"I'll do it! I'll do it! Don't you worry!"

And off he ran.

Lapot again gave a signal for a Commanders' Council, this time at the church porch where Gud's detachment had set up their sleeping quarters.

Standing on the church steps, Lapot made the following speech:

"Commanders! We won't sit down, it's only for a minute or two! Kindly teach your lads to wipe their noses. They can't go about the way they do, dribbling all over the yard. And another thing: about the toilet—Zhorka told you at the meeting. And one more thing—Alyoshka's set up boxes for rubbish but the boys scatter it all over the place."

"Don't you be in such a hurry," cried Vetkovsky, smiling. "First let's clear up all the filth, never mind the boxes."

"None of that, Kostya! Clearing up is one thing, and keeping order's another. And you a traveller! And don't forget—everybody's got to be told our rule, or else they'll say afterwards: 'We didn't know! How were we to know?'"

"What rule?"

"Our rule about spitting. Say it all together."

Lapot conducted with his hand, and the laughing commanders recited in unison:

"Spit once—

Wash floors thrice!"

A few idlers, who regarded the Commanders' Council with the awed trepidation of the freshly-initiated, stared open-mouthed. Lapot dismissed the Council, and the boys bore the new slogan to the temporary camps of the de-

tachments. They bore it right up to Khalabuda, who, to my astonishment, was seen emerging from the cowshed, covered with straw, dust, and scraps of fodder.

"Those damned women!" he exclaimed in his deep bass. "They left me behind, and now I shall have to walk to the station. Yes, yes. 'Spit once, wash floors thrice!' Splendid! Vitya—take pity on an old fellow! You're the boss in the stable—harness some hack or other and take me to the station!"

Vitka glanced towards the veteran Anton Bratchenko, and Anton, who was also the proud possessor of a bass voice, growled out:

"Why a hack? Harness Molodets to the carriage, and take the old chap! He groomed Dawn today, himself." Here Bratchenko turned to Khalabuda. "Now let's clean *you* up!"

Just then I was approached by Taranets, wearing a monitor's armlet, and obviously upset about something.

"There's some agronomists or something living there. They won't leave their bedroom, and they say 'we don't want your detachments!'"

"It's quite clean there, isn't it?"

"I've just been there. I examined the beds and that—they've got a lot of stuff hanging up. Heaps of lice. And bedbugs."

"Let's go and see!"

The agronomists' room was in a state of the utmost confusion. It was obvious that it had not been turned out for a long time. Voskoboinikov, who had been appointed commander in the cowshed detachment, and two others from his detachment, had obeyed the instructions to hand in their things for disinfection, and gone away leaving gaping holes in the agronomical nest and such odds and ends as are the inevitable accompaniment of moving house. There were, however, several boys left in the room, and these gave me a distinctly glum reception. But I knew, and they knew, on which side the victory was, and that it was only a question of the form their capitulation was to take.

"So you don't wish to submit to the resolution of the general meeting?" I asked.

Silence.

"Were you at the meeting?"

Silence. Taranets replied for them.

"They weren't."

"I gave you plenty of time for making up your minds. What do you consider yourselves—colonists or lodgers?"

Silence.

"If you are lodgers I can only allow you to stay in this room for not more than ten days. And I'm not going to feed you."

"And who will feed us?" asked Svatko.

Taranets smiled:

"Funny guys!"

"I don't know," I said. "*I'm* not going to."

"And won't you give us dinner today?"

"No."

"Have you the right not to?"

"I have."

"And if we work?"

"Only colonists will work here."

"We'll be colonists, but we'll live in this room."

"No!"

"What are we to do, then?"

I took out my watch.

"I'll give you five minutes for reflection. Let the monitor know what you decide."

"Very good!" said Taranets.

Half an hour later I passed the agronomists' annex again. Alyosha Volkov was locking the door, Taranets standing by in his official capacity.

"Have they cleared out?"

"And *how!*" laughed Taranets.

"Are they all in different detachments?"

"Yes. In different detachments—one to a detachment."

In an hour and a half a grand dinner took place in the dining hall, at festive tables spread with white cloths. The dining hall was changed out of recognition. The advance detachment had been up at dawn, washing and scrubbing, and adorning the walls with branches and marguerites. The moment the Gorkytes arrived from the station, Alyosha Volkov, according to instructions previously agreed upon, had hung up portraits of Lenin, Voroshilov and Gorky, and Shelaputin and Toska had hung slogans and greetings from the ceiling, among which, somewhat

surprisingly, the legend "No Whining!" fluttered over the heads of the spectators.

The Kuryazhites, subdued and utterly vanquished, cropped, washed, all in new white shirts, were set in a narrow elegant framework of Gorkyites, from which they could not possibly escape. They sat quietly in their places, their hands folded on their knees, regarding with profound respect the mountains of bread on the dishes, and the crystal-clear carafes.

Some of the girls in white aprons, Zhevily, Shelaputin and Belukhin in white coats, moved about noiselessly, exchanging whispered words, straightening the last rows of knives and forks, adding something here, making a place for somebody there. The Kuryazhites submitted to them apathetically, like patients in a sanatorium, and Belukhin tended them solicitously, as if they really were patients.

I took up my position in an unencumbered space beside the portraits, whence I could see right to the end of this oasis which had sprung up as by a miracle in the befouled desert of the monastery. A silence which could almost be felt hung over the room, a silence which seemed to be transformed on flushed cheeks, shining eyes, and bashful grace, into a sense of rightness, and of the mystery of a new birth.

Noiselessly, almost unobserved, the buglers and drummers entered one by one, flushed and anxious, and ranged themselves carefully along the wall. It was only now that everybody noticed them; but after this—dinner forgotten—all eyes were glued upon them.

Taranets appeared in the doorway.

"Rise for the colours!"

The Gorkyites sprang to attention with the ease of habit. The Kuryazh contingent, taken by surprise, scarcely had time to place their hands on the edge of the tables, preparatory to rising, when they were once more taken by surprise—this time by the thunder of our orchestra.

Taranets brought in our banner, now out of its cover, its gay folds of crimson silk streaming boldly. The banner was brought to a standstill beneath the portraits, by its very presence lending our dining room a festive, patriotic aspect.

"Sit down!"

I delivered a short speech to the colonists, in which I referred neither to work nor discipline, and refrained from placing any demands on them, and expressed no doubts of any sort. I merely congratulated them on their new life, and expressed my conviction that this life would be as splendid as human life could be.

"We're going to live a fine, joyous, rational life," I told them, "because we are human beings, because we have heads on our shoulders, and because that's what we want. And who's to prevent us? The people don't exist who could deprive us of our work and our earning. There aren't any such people in our Union. And just look what people we have around us! Just look—we've had an old worker and guerilla fighter with us all day—Comrade Khalabuda. He helped you to shunt the train, to unload the trucks, to clean down the horses. We should never get to the end if we tried to count the fine people, the great people, our leaders, our Bolsheviki, who are thinking of us, and who want to help us. I'm going to read you two letters. You'll see that you are not alone, you'll see that you are loved, that you are looked after. Here's a letter from Maxim Gorky to the chairman of the Kharkov Executive Committee.

"I want to thank you from my heart for your aid and attention to the Gorky Colony.

"I only know the colony through correspondence with the boys and girls and their director, but it seems to me that the colony deserves serious attention and active help.

"Crime is continually increasing among street waifs, and diseased elements are growing up among the healthy shoots. It is to be hoped that the work of such colonies as that to which you are lending your support will open the way to a struggle against the diseased elements, and, as it has done before, will make something good of something bad.

"I remain, Comrade, wishing you the best of health and spirits, and success in your difficult work,

"Yours,
"M. Gorky."

Reply of the chairman of the Kharkov Executive Committee to Maxim Gorky:

"Dear Comrade,

"The Presidium of the Kharkov District Executive Committee asks you to accept profound gratitude for the attention shown by you to the children's colony bearing your name.

"The problems concerning the struggle against homelessness among children, and juvenile delinquency are receiving our special attention, and impel us to take the most serious measures for the education and adaptation of waifs to a life of healthy work.

"This is, of course, a task of the utmost difficulty, the fulfilling of which is bound to take some time, but we are already at grips with it.

"The Presidium of the Executive Committee is convinced that the work of the colony, under its new conditions, will be crowned with success, that this work will be extended in the near future, and that by combined efforts it will be brought to a height worthy of a colony bearing your name.

"Allow me, dear Comrade, to express our sincere wishes for your health and strength, further useful activities, and future literary work."

While reading these letters I kept glancing over the top of the paper at the colonists. They listened to me, and their souls seemed, without the slightest reservation, to rush into their amazed and joyful eyes. At the same time they were incapable of embracing all the mystery and scope of this new world. Many of them half rose in their places, and, leaning on their elbows, craned their necks in my direction. The *Rabfak* students, standing against the wall, were smiling dreamily, the girls were dabbing at their eyes, and the courageous juniors were glancing at them furtively. At a table to my right sat Korotkov, knitting his fine brows in thought. Khovrakh, his cheeks squeezed painfully between his fists, sat looking out of the window.

As soon as I stopped reading, a wave of movement and speech surged out from behind the tables, but Karabanov raised his hand:

"Well, now! What are we to say? We must . . . confound it! . . . We must sing, not talk! Let's start, only properly, you know—the *Internationale*."

The boys yelled their satisfaction, but I noticed that many of the Kuryazhites looked embarrassed and fell silent, and I guessed that they did not know the words of the *Internationale*.

Lapot jumped onto a bench.

"Come on! Girls, you begin—sing up!"

He waved his hand, and we sang.

Perhaps it was because every line of the *Internationale* had now become so close to our everyday life that we sang our anthem so gaily and smilingly. The boys squinted towards Lapot, involuntarily imitating his animated, ardent expression, through which Lapot seemed capable of reflecting every conceivable human idea. And when we sang:

*The Internationale
Unites the human race...*

he pointed expressively to our buglers, contributing to our chorus the silvery voice of their instruments.

We finished singing. Matvei Belukhin waved a white handkerchief, and shouted in the direction of the window looking into the kitchen:

"Bring in the goose, the mead, the beer, the vodka, all the other good things, and a full plate of ice cream for everybody!"

The boys laughed loudly, fixing their excited gaze on Matvei, and Belukhin met it with a friendly grin, enunciating in his level tenor:

"They haven't brought the vodka and various other delicacies, dear comrades, but there *will* be ice cream, word of honour, there will! And now eat up your borshch!"

Good, friendly smiles travelled over the dining room. Following their passage, my gaze unexpectedly lighted upon the wide-open eyes of Dzhurinskaya. She was standing in the doorway, and behind her could be seen the smiling countenance of Yuryev. I hastened up to them.

Dzhurinskaya shook hands with me with an absent-minded air, unable to tear herself away from the lines of cropped heads, whiteclad shoulders, and friendly smiles.

"What's all this, Anton Semyonovich? Wait a minute! Can it be?" her lips trembled. "Are these all yours? And where are . . . those? Do tell me what's been going on here?"

"Going on? God knows what's been going on here! I think it's what you call conversion. But they're all ours, you know!"

10

AT THE FOOT OF OLYMPUS

May and June in Kuryazh were months of almost intolerable toil. It is not at this moment my intention to speak of this work in the language of enthusiasm.

If work is approached in a sober spirit it has to be admitted that much of it is onerous, disagreeable, uninteresting, demanding enormous patience, and the habit of overcoming pain and disgust. And there is much work which is only possible because man has learned to suffer and endure.

People have long learned to reconcile themselves to the burden of toil, and to its physical repulsiveness, but the explanations advanced for this reconciliation are not always satisfactory to our minds. Recognizing the weakness of human nature, we still tolerate certain motives of personal satisfaction and self-interest, while persistently endeavouring to substitute for them the broader incentive of collective interests. But many of the problems arising in this connection are of an extremely confused nature, and we had to solve them in Kuryazh with hardly any outside aid.

One day, true pedagogics will work out these problems, analyze the mechanics of human effort, point out the proportion of will, pride, shame, suggestibility, imitation, fear, competition involved, and the extent to which all this is combined with the phenomena of pure consciousness, conviction, and reason. My own experience, by the way, definitely confirms the theory that the distance between the elements of pure consciousness and muscular expenditure is quite considerable, and that the more primitive and material elements are absolutely essential as connecting links.

The problem of consciousness was very successfully solved on the day of the arrival at Kuryazh of the Gorkyites. In the course of a single day the Kuryazh crowd was imbued with the conviction that the newly-arrived detachments had brought them a better life, that persons of experience had come to help them, that they would have to march forward with these persons. The decisive factor here was not even considerations of advantage, but, of course, collective suggestion—not calculations, but eyes, ears, voices and laughter. And yet, as a result of this first day, the Kuryazhites were unreservedly anxious to become members of the Gorky collective, just because it *was* a collective, and, as such, one of the hitherto untried sweets of life for them.

But so far I had only won consciousness over to my side, and this was terribly inadequate. The very next day this inadequacy displayed itself in all its complexity. The evening before, mixed detachments had been organized for the various assignments mentioned in the declaration. Either teachers or Gorkyites had been appointed to each detachment, the spirit of the Kuryazhites had been excellent from the early morning, and yet by dinner-time it was found that they had done very poor work. After dinner many of them did not even go out to work, but hid themselves here and there, while some, from habit, were drawn to the town, and to Ryzhov.

I personally inspected all the mixed detachments—everywhere the picture was the same. Everywhere there was a very slight sprinkling of Gorkyites, and a striking predominance of Kuryazhites, and there was a danger that the style of work of the latter might prevail, especially since there were many new ones among the original Gorkyites, while some of our veterans might also succumb to the levelling influence of Kuryazh, and simply disappear as an active force.

It would have been dangerous to employ external disciplinary measures, such as act so harmoniously and effectively in a mature collective. There were too many offenders, and to deal with them would have been both difficult and ineffective, besides demanding much time, since a retributive measure is only of use when it removes the individual from the ranks, and is supported by the

firm sentence of public opinion. Besides, external measures are at their least effective in the sphere of the organization of physical efforts.

One less experienced might have consoled himself with the following considerations: the lads are not yet used to labour discipline, they haven't yet acquired the hang of things, they don't know how to work, they're not accustomed to keeping in step with the work of their comrades, they lack that pride in work which invariably distinguishes the member of a collective; and all this cannot be acquired in a single day—such things take time. Unfortunately, I was unable to grasp at this consolation. I was fully aware of the relentless law: there can be no simple dependency in pedagogical phenomena, here the syllogistic formula, the rapid deductive leap, are untenable.

Things being what they were in Kuryazh, in the month of May, the slow, leisurely development of joint effort threatened to affect the general style of work in its average, if not minimum forms, and to act as a brake on the springly, rapid, precise tempo of the original Gorkyites.

Style and tone have always been ignored in pedagogical theory, but in reality these qualities come under one of the most important headings in collective education. Style is a delicate and perishable substance. It needs constant care, daily attention, and requires as much tending as a bed of flowers. It cannot be rapidly built up, since it is unthinkable without the accumulation of traditions, that is to say, of conceptions and habits accepted not by the consciousness alone, but by conscious respect for the experience of older generations, for the vast authority of a given collective. The failure of many children's institutions may be attributed to the fact that they have created neither a style, nor habits and traditions, or—where they have begun to do this—the constantly changing educational inspectors have systematically undermined them, moved thereto, of course, by the most laudable considerations. Thanks to this the "child" of social education has always lived without traditions of any sort—whether of an age or a year.

The fact that the consciousness of the Kuryazhites had been won over enabled me to get into closer and more confidential relations with the children themselves. But

that was not enough. A true victory required absolute mastery of pedagogical technique. I was just as solitary in the sphere of this technique as I had been in 1920, although I was no longer so comically ignorant. My loneliness was of a specific nature. I already had a solid phalanx of supporters, both among the teachers and the children of the collective, and with such forces at my disposal I was able to embark upon the most complicated operations. But all this was on the lower levels.

In the upper regions, and the spheres immediately beneath them, on the heights of the pedagogical Olympus, any pedagogical technique of one's own was considered a heresy.

"Up above," the "child" was regarded as a creature filled with some special gaseous substance for which no one had as yet found a name. In reality it was the same old-fashioned soul on which the apostles of old had practised their skill. It was assumed (the working hypothesis) that this substance was capable of self-development, if only it was let alone. Hosts of books had been written on the subject, but all of them, in their essence, merely repeated the dictums of Rousseau:

"Childhood should be regarded with awe...."

"Beware of tampering with nature!"

The principal dogma of this creed consisted in the statement that, given the aforementioned awe and respect for nature, the substance will inevitably develop into a communist personality. In reality the only things that grew under such purely natural conditions were what always does grow when nature is left to herself—just ordinary weeds: but this did not seem to trouble anyone—abstract ideas and principles were what the Olympians held dear.

When I pointed out the disparity between these weeds and our ideal of the communist personality, I was accused of pragmatism, and if it was desired to disclose my true nature, someone would add:

"Of course, Makarenko is good at his job, but he's a poor theoretician."

Discipline, too, came under discussion. By way of a theoretical basis for the problem two words were used which are frequently met with in the works of Lenin: "conscious discipline." Anyone endowed with common

sense will take these words as expressing the simple, comprehensible, and wholly practical idea, that the necessity, usefulness, obligatory character, and class significance of a given disciplinary measure must be made absolutely clear. But pedagogical "theory" interpreted these words in quite another sense: according to it, discipline should develop not from collective experience, not as a result of the friendly pressure of a collective, but from pure consciousness, from purely intellectual conviction, from the emanations of the soul, from ideas. The propounders of this theory went even further, deciding that "conscious discipline" is no good when it is the result of adult influence. This, they maintained, is not conscious discipline, but mere drill, the coercion of the soul's delicate emanations. Moreover, it is not conscious discipline, but "self-discipline" that is required. In the same way they reasoned that any form of organization for children is unnecessary and harmful, excepting "self-organization," which is essential.

Back again in my godforsaken abode, I began to think. We all know perfectly well, I reasoned, what sort of human being we should aim at turning out. Every class-conscious worker of any education knows this too. Every Party member knows it well. The problem, therefore, is not *what* is to be done, but *how* it is to be done. And this is a matter of pedagogical technique.

Technique must always be derived from experience. The laws for metalwork could not have been established if no one in the history of mankind had ever worked on metal before. Only when technical experience has been accumulated are inventions, improvement, selection, and discarding possible.

Our pedagogical "industry" had never been based upon the logic of technology, but invariably upon that of "moral persuasion." This is particularly noticeable in the sphere of education in the broad sense of the word, rather less so in that of classroom work.

Therefore it is that we lack all the essential branches of industry: the technological process, operational planning, constructional work, the use of conductors and appliances, the fixing of norms, controls, tolerance, discards.

When I timidly uttered words to this effect at the foot

of "Olympus," the gods threw brickbats at me, and shouted that this was a mechanistic theory. But the longer I thought about it, the more analogies I discovered between educational processes and ordinary industrial processes, and I cannot say that there was anything alarmingly mechanistic in drawing such analogies. I still adhered to my conception of the human personality in all its complexity, wealth and beauty, but it seemed to me that precisely because of this we were bound to approach it with the most exact gauges, the deepest sense of responsibility—that science, and not a farrago of old wives' tales was required here. The profound analogy between industrial and educational processes, far from degrading the conception of human personality in my eyes, on the contrary, increases respect for it, for one cannot help respecting an efficient and intricate machine.

At any rate it was clear to me that many details of human personality, any behaviour could be made from dies, simply stamped out *en masse*, although of course the dies themselves had to be of the finest description, demanding scrupulous care and precision. There are, however, details which demand individual handling by a skilled master, one possessing dexterous hands and keen sight, and others which require special and elaborate adjustments, demanding, in their turn, infinite ingenuity and a touch of genius. And a special science is needed for all the details and all the work of the educator. How is it that the resistance of materials is studied in all higher technical institutes, while in the pedagogical institutes no study is made of resistance of personalities to educational measures? After all, it is no secret that such resistance does exist! And why, oh why, have we no organ capable of saying to our pedagogical bunglers:

"Ninety per cent of your output is spoils! You're turning out not communist individuals, but rotters, drunkards, shirkers, and self-seekers. Kindly make good the deficit out of your salaries!"

Why have we no science of raw materials? Why does nobody really know whether a matchbox or an airplane can be made from a given material?

No details or separate stage of work were visible from the Olympian offices. From those heights nothing could

be seen but the boundless ocean of childhood in the abstract, and in the offices themselves was the model of an abstract child, built of the most fragile materials—ideas, printed matter, utopian dreams. When the Olympians came down to me in the colony, their eyes were not opened, the living collective of the children seemed nothing new to them, they saw no need for the technological approach. But I, while conducting them over the colony, on the rack of theoretical controversy, found myself quite unable to shake off some trifling technological detail.

The floor in the dormitory of the fourth detachment has not been washed today, because the pail has disappeared. I am concerned both about the material value of the pail, and the technique of its disappearance. Pails are issued to detachments at the responsibility of the commander's deputy, who establishes shifts for cleaning, and, consequently, individual responsibility for equipment. And it is a mere trifle like this—the responsibility for cleaning, and for the pail and the floorcloth, which represents to me the technological principle.

This trifle is like some worn-out, ancient turner's lathe in a factory, innocent of manufacturer's name and date of production. Such lathes are invariably huddled away in some remote grease-stained corner of the shop, and referred to as "goats." They are kept for grinding all sorts of details of secondary importance—washers, props, gaskets, screws of every description. And yet, when one of these "goats" starts baulking, a faint ripple of uneasiness sweeps over the factory, in the assembly shop they begin to produce "token output"; and the shelves of the depot soon groan beneath a disagreeable load of details marked "unfinished."

The responsibility for the pail and the floorcloth is for me just such a lathe; it may be the very last in the row, but the parts required for the tightening up of the most important of human attributes, the sense of responsibility, are ground on it. Without this attribute there can be no communist personality—nothing but an "unfinished product."

The Olympians despised technique. Thanks to their sway, pedagogical-technical thought, particularly in the sphere of educational practice, had long become a dead

letter in our pedagogical institutes. Education was technically poorer than any other sphere of Soviet life and so education was a mere craft, and of all crafts, the most backward. Even the production of cider was on a higher technical level. And for this very reason the complaint of Luka Lukich Khlopov, in Gogol's *Inspector-General* still held good.

"There can be nothing worse than to work in a learned department—everyone interferes, everyone wants to show that he, too, is a clever fellow."

And this is no joke, no humorous exaggeration, but a sober truth. "Show me the man too dull-witted" to solve any and every educational problem? In those days a man no sooner achieved a seat at a desk than he began to weigh results, to link up causes, to dissolve ties. What book could we put into his hands to sober him down? And what need had he for a book? He had a child himself, hadn't he? But here is a professor of pedagogics, a specialist on educational questions, writing as follows to the GPU, or NKVD:

"My son has several times robbed me, spends the nights away from home. . . . I therefore appeal to you with the earnest request. . . ."

Why, one would ask, should our Cheka-men be expected to be more skilled educational mechanics than the professors of pedagogics themselves?

I could not immediately find an answer to this absorbing question, and at that time, in the year 1926, I was, technically speaking, no better off than Galileo with his telescope. I had my choice of alternatives—either catastrophe at Kuryazh, or catastrophe on Olympus, and subsequent expulsion from paradise. I chose the second. Paradise, shimmering with the rainbow colours of theory, blazed over my head, but I went up to the Kuryazh mixed detachment, and said to the lads:

"Well, my boys, your work's rotten! I mean to deal with you at today's meeting. To hell with you and your work!"

The boys reddened, and one of them, taller than the others, pointed towards me with his spade, and growled out resentfully:

"The spades are blunt—just look at them!"

"That's a lie!" Toska Solovyov told him. "That's a lie, and you know it!"

"What are they, then—sharp?"

"And you didn't sit on the sand-heap a whole hour? You didn't?"

"Listen to me!" I said to the mixed detachment. "You've got to finish this assignment by suppertime. If you don't, we shall work after supper. I'll work with you myself."

"We'll finish," the owner of the blunt spade would hasten to answer me. "It's not such a lot to finish."

Toska laughed.

"Ain't he sly?"

There were no grounds for distress here. When people who dawdle over their work try to find good reasons for their dawdling, it should be regarded as a manifestation of initiative and creative spirit, properties which are highly valued on the Olympian market. All that was required of my technique was to quench this creative flame, nothing more, and I was happy to observe that there were hardly any demonstrative refusals to work. Some quietly hid, slipping away somewhere, but these troubled me least of all, for the boys themselves had a technique for dealing with such individuals. Wherever the truant escaped to, he had to take his dinner at the table of his detachment, whether he liked it or not. The Kuryazhites would meet him without betraying much indignation, sometimes merely asking him in guileless accents:

"We thought you had run away!"

The Gorkyites' tongues (and their hands, too!) were a great deal more expressive. The truant would saunter up to the table trying to look as if he were just an ordinary individual, unworthy of special attention, but it is the commander's business to see that everyone gets his due.

"Kolka!" the commander would call out severely. "Look alive! Don't you see? Krivoruchko's come! Clear a space for him, quick! Give him a clean plate! What's that spoon you're giving him? Get a better one!"

The spoon disappears through the kitchen window.

"Pour him out a plate of the richest soup! The very richest! Petka, run to the cook and get him a proper spoon! Quick! Stepka, cut him some bread. . . . Watch how you cut it—it's only muzhiks who eat such enormous chunks

of bread, he likes his thin. . . . Where on earth can Petka be with the spoon? Hurry up, Petka! Vanka, go and call Petka with the spoon!"

Krivoruchko is seated before a plateful of really rich borshch, his flushed countenance bent over its surface. From a nearby table someone asks sedately:

"Hey, thirteen! Have you a guest there?"

"Yes, his worship has come—he's come, he intends to have dinner. . . . Come on, Petka, give us the spoon, there's no time to lose!"

Petka comes bustling into the room with an air of haste and solicitude, solemnly holding out in both hands, as if it were some precious offering, a spoon of the ordinary colony type. This seems to enrage the commander:

"D'you call that a spoon? Didn't you hear what I said? Bring the biggest one you can find!"

Petkya makes a show of officious haste, rushing about the dining room like a madman, blundering into windows as if mistaking them for doors. An elaborate drama is enacted, in which even the kitchen staff takes part. A few among the audience look on with bated breath, for it is a mere chance that they have not been made object of this eager hospitality themselves. Petka once more plunges into the dining room, a greasy colander, or a soupladle in his hands. The dining room resounds with laughter. At this juncture, Lapot slowly extricates himself from his detachment's table, and approaches the scene of action. His gaze sweeps in silence over the faces of all the participants in the drama, and rests sternly on the commander. Then his severe face could be seen by all to melt into an expression of tender pity and commiseration, the very emotions which everyone knew were perfectly alien to Lapot. The diners would hold their breath in anticipation of a particularly fine bit of acting. Lapot, laying his hand on Krivoruchko's head, and modulating his voice to the tenderest falsetto, would say:

"Eat up, little one, don't be afraid! Why are you all so down on the lad? Eh? Eat up, little one! What? You haven't got a spoon? What a shame—give him a spoon! This one will do."

But the "little one" cannot eat. Sobbing loudly he struggles out of his place, leaving the plate of lovely rich

borshch untasted. Lapot gazes at the sufferer, his face showing the depths of feeling he is capable of.

"What's this?" he asks, almost in tears. "You won't have your dinner? Look what a chap can be brought to!"

Lapot glances at the other boys, laughing noiselessly. Then, his arms round the heaving shoulders of Krivoruchko, he leads him tenderly out of the dining room. The audience is rocking with laughter. But there is another act of the drama, which the audience does not see. Lapot has taken the "guest" to the kitchen, seated him at a large kitchen table, and ordered the cook to feed "this person" up, "because, you see, he's been badly treated." And just as Krivoruchko, still sobbing, has finished his borshch, and is able to spare a little energy to see to his nose and tears, Lapot—out-Judasing Judas—delivers his most subtle thrust:

"Why are they all so down on you? You probably didn't go to work—is that it?"

Krivoruchko nods, hiccoughs, sighs, expressing himself with these signals in default of words.

"Well, they *are* funny guys! Only think of it! You meant it to be the last time, didn't you? The last time—and they jump on a fellow! It might happen to anyone! I remember when I first came to the colony, I didn't go to work for a whole week. . . . And you only missed two days. Let me have a look at your biceps. I say! With such biceps a chap ought to work. . . . Oughtn't he?"

Krivoruchko again nods, and starts upon his mush. Lapot moves towards the dining room, throwing Krivoruchko an unexpected compliment:

"As soon as I saw you, I knew you were the right sort of lad!"

A few such performances, and running away from a detachment during working hours became an impossibility. Indeed, the habit was soon eradicated altogether. It was harder with malingerers like Khovrakh, who, after two days of work, would get sunstroke, and, creeping under a bush with loud groans, would settle down for a rest. But Taranets was a brilliant hand at dealing with such cases. Getting from Anton Bratchenko a farm cart, with Molo-dets between the shafts, he would go out into the field

with a bevy of medical orderlies, the whole turnout adorned with flags and red crosses. His greatest standby was Kuzma Leshy, armed with a pair of real smithy bellows. Khovrakh would just be beginning to enjoy himself in his leafy grove, when the "first-aid brigade" would be down on him. Leshy would set up his bellows immediately in front of the patient, and eager hands would work it with unfeigned zeal. They would fan Khovrakh wherever the sunstroke could be supposed to be nestling and then bear him off to the "ambulance." But Khovrakh would have recovered by now, and the ambulance would rattle quietly back to the colony. Hard as it had been for Khovrakh to submit himself to this medical procedure, it was still harder for him to return to the mixed detachment, and swallow in silence fresh doses of medicine in the form of the most innocent inquiries.

"Did it help, Khovrakh? It's a splendid remedy, isn't it?"

These were, of course, the methods of guerilla warfare, but they sprang from the prevailing atmosphere and the common aspirations of the collective to get the work going. And atmosphere and aspirations were the real objects of my technological endeavours.

The detachment, of course, remained the basic technological feature. On "Olympus" they never did discover what the detachment really stood for, despite my earnest endeavours to explain its significance, and definitive role in the pedagogical process, to the Olympians. But we spoke different languages, and it was no use trying to explain. I will quote here almost verbatim a conversation between myself and a professor of pedagogics, who visited the colony—a well-dressed, spectacled individual wearing a lounge suit, obviously a thoughtful and virtuous man. He seemed extremely anxious to know why the tables in the dining room were allotted to the detachments by the commander on duty, and not by a teacher.

"No, but seriously, Comrade! You must be joking! Treat me seriously, please! How can a boy monitor organize everything in the dining room, while you stand calmly by. Are you sure he'll do everything properly, that he won't be unfair to anyone? After all, he might simply make mistakes!"

"It's not so very difficult to organize a dining room," I replied to the professor. "Besides, we have an old and excellent rule here."

"Have you? A rule?"

"Yes, a rule. It's this: all work, pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult, is performed by the detachments in shifts, according to numerical order."

"What? How d'you mean? I don't quite understand. . . ."

"It's quite simple. The first detachment now occupies the best place in the dining room, a month later the second detachment will get it, and so on."

"I see. And what do you call unpleasant work?"

"There's often a great deal of what we call unpleasant work. For instance, if any urgent additional work has to be done just now, the first detachment will be called upon to do it, and the next time any turns up—the second. When cleaning allotments are given out, the first detachment will have first of all to clean out the toilets. Of course this only applies to routine work."

"And was this appalling rule your idea?"

"Not at all! It was the boys' idea. It's more convenient for them this way. You see it's very hard to distribute this sort of thing, somebody's sure to be dissatisfied. And now it goes quite mechanically. A shift lasts a month."

"So your twentieth detachment will only clean out the toilets in twenty months' time?"

"Of course, but they won't get the best place in the dining room for twenty months, either."

"Appalling! But in twenty months' time there will be new people in the twentieth detachment. What about that?"

"No! The composition of the detachments scarcely varies. We believe in lasting collectives. Of course, someone may leave, and there may be a couple of new ones. But even supposing the detachment were mainly made up of new ones, it wouldn't matter. The detachment is a collective, with its own traditions, history, merits, and reputation. True, just now the detachments have been changed about quite a lot, but the nucleus remains the same in each."

"I don't understand. It seems like tricks to me. It isn't serious. What significance can the detachment and its

reputation have, if there are new people in it? It's like nothing on earth!"

"It's like the Chapayev Division," I said, smiling.

"Oh, there you go again with your militarization! But, after all, what's it got to do with Chapayev?"

"There are no longer the same people in the division as there were before. And there is no more Chapayev. New people—but they carry on the reputation and honour of Chapayev and his regiments, don't you see that? They are answerable for Chapayev's reputation. And if they disgrace it, during the next five to ten years fresh people will be answerable for their disgrace."

"I can't understand what you need all this for!"

And he never did understand, this professor. What more could I have done?

A great work was accomplished in the Kuryazh detachments during the first few days. A teacher had long been assigned to every two or three detachments. The function of these teachers was to stimulate within detachments the conception of collective honour, and the desire to occupy the best and most looked-up-to position in the colony. Of course, the new and lofty idea of collective interests was not born in a single day, but it developed fairly rapidly, much more rapidly than if we had merely tried to deal with individuals.

A second and extremely important step was the creation of fresh stimuli. There are, as is well known, two ways of doing this, and, consequently, two ways of heightening endeavour. The first consists in providing stimuli for the individual, with a certain emphasis upon his material interests. This method was, however, strictly prohibited by the pedagogical thinkers of that time. At the hint of the most trifling sum being earmarked for payment or rewards to the children, a hubbub would arise on "Olympus." The pedagogical thinkers were convinced that money was of the devil, had they not heard Mephistopheles sing:

Men will perish for gold...

Their attitude to wages and to money was so hysterical that it was impossible even to broach the subject to

them. Nothing but sprinkling with holy water would have done any good, and I hadn't any.

And yet wages play a very important role. Wages help the novice to learn to coordinate personal and social interests, he at once plunges into the complex network of the Soviet Industrial-Financial Plan, of economic calculations and evaluations, has an opportunity of studying the whole system of Soviet factory economics, and finds himself, at least theoretically, on a par with all other workers. Last but not least, he learns to value earnings, and does not leave the children's home like a young lady from boarding school who has learned nothing about life and has acquired nothing but "ideals."

But nothing could be done in this respect—the taboo was too strict.

Only the second method was left to me—that of raising the tone of the collective, and organizing an elaborate system of collective perspectives. This method seemed less diabolical, and the Olympians were tolerant as to its application, though giving vent to an occasional suspicious growl.

Man must have something joyful ahead of him to live for. The true stimulus in human life is the morrow's joy. In pedagogical technique this not too distant joy is one of the most important objects to be worked for. In the first place the joy itself has to be organized, brought to life, and converted into a possibility. Next, primitive sources of satisfaction must be steadily converted into more complex and humanly significant joys. A most interesting line can be traced here—from the simple satisfaction derived from eating a sweet biscuit, to the satisfaction based upon a sense of duty.

Strength and beauty are the two human qualities which are usually found most appealing. And both depend entirely on the individual's attitude to future prospects. That person whose behaviour is ruled by the most immediate gratification—today's dinner (*today's*, be it understood)—is the weakest of men. If, however, he contents himself with a narrowly selfish prospect, even a distant one, he may appear strong, but he will never evoke in others the sense of the beauty and true value of personality. The more comprehensive the collective with whose future prospects

the individual is able to identify his own, the more beautiful and noble that individual appears.

To educate a man is to furnish him with a stimulus leading to the morrow's joy. A whole book could be written about this most important work. It consists in the creation of fresh stimuli, in the full use of existing ones, in the gradual building-up of worthier ones. A beginning can be made with a good dinner, a visit to the circus, or cleaning the pond, but the prospects affecting the whole collective must be created and gradually widened, and brought to the point where they become those of the Soviet Union itself.

After the conquest of Kuryazh, the Day of the First Sheaf became the nearest collective prospect.

I must, however, mention one memorable evening, which became, for some reason, a turning point for the labour efforts of the Kuryazhites, although I had never counted on this result, merely desiring to do what had to be done, without the slightest utilitarian aim.

The new colonists did not know who Gorky was, so as soon as possible after our arrival, we got up a Gorky evening. It was all very modest, as I did not wish to give it the nature of a concert or a literary evening. We did not invite anyone from outside. Over the simply decorated platform was hung a portrait of Alexei Maximovich.

I told the children about the life and work of Gorky, going into a good deal of detail. Some of the older boys recited passages from *Childhood*.

The new colonists listened with wide-open eyes. They had never imagined that such a life was possible. They put no questions, and showed no emotion, till the moment when Lapot produced a bundle of letters from Gorky.

"Did he write that? Himself? He wrote to the colonists? Come on—show us!"

Lapot passed the unfolded letters carefully along the rows of colonists. Every now and then someone would seize Lapot's hand in the endeavour to penetrate more deeply into what was happening.

"You see, you see! 'My dear Comrades!' Those very words!"

All the letters were read out at the meeting. After this I asked:

"Has anyone anything he would like to say?"

For a minute or so nobody seemed to be going to respond. And then, blushing, Korotkov made his way up to the platform, and said:

"I want to speak to the new Gorkyites . . . like me. . . . But I'm no good at talking. Well, here goes! Fellows! We've been living here, and we've got eyes, but we never saw a thing . . . we were just like the blind, upon my word we were! It's a shame, the years that have been wasted! And just now we've been shown—Gorky. And I feel all stirred up, upon my word, I do! I don't know about all of you. . . ."

Korotkov took a step towards the edge of the platform, narrowing his fine, grave eyes ever so slightly.

"We've got to work, lads! We've got to work quite differently. D'you understand?"

"We do, we do!" shouted the boys lustily, and Korotkov descended from the platform to the accompaniment of loud clapping.

The next day I did not know them. Puffing, blowing, and tossing their heads, they made the most conscientious and stupendous efforts to overcome that sloth which is man's oldest heritage. They had caught a glimpse of the most joyful perspective of all—the value of human personality.

11

THE FIRST SHEAF

The last days of May brought a succession of new offerings—clean-swept areas in the yard, new doors and windows, new fragrance out-of-doors, a new spirit everywhere. The last remnants of sloth were being cast lightly aside. The festival of our victory gleamed ever more brightly in the distance. From the entrails of the monastery hill, from out of the innumerable cells, the last foul emanations of the past floated upwards, to be immediately seized by the assiduous summer breeze, and borne far, far away, to some dump for the trash of history. The work of the wind was easier now, for the ancient, massive walls had been demolished by the mixed detachments in a fortnight of arduous work. Falcon, Mary and the con-

valescent Kuryazh steeds, who had been given the decent names of Cornflower, Monk and Eaglet by the Commanders' Council, had borne away the fragments of brick debris where it would be of most use—the best and biggest fragments for building a hog-house, the smaller bits for laying paths, and for emptying into various pits and hollows. Other mixed detachments, armed with spades, wheelbarrows and handbarrows, widened, cleared and levelled terraces on our slope, dug descents to the valley below, and made stairways, while Borovoy's brigade repaired a score or so of benches for use on various terraces, and at appropriate corners. It was getting light and spacious in our yard, more sky was visible, and the greenness of shrubs and blue distances of the horizon surrounded us like a huge frame.

The yard and the slopes around had been thoroughly cleaned up, and our gardener Mizyak, a gloomy, taciturn individual, such as are often met among the plain husbands of beautiful women, was trimming the sides of the yard and the pathways, piling the worn bricks of the monastery pavements in neat heaps.

On the north side of the yard the foundations of our hog-house had been laid. The hog-house promised to be a fine one, with splendid sties. Sherre no longer looked as if he had been burnt out of house and home. He, too, shared the Archimedean rapture, for over thirty mixed detachments went to work daily, and we were conscious of an enormous force in our hands. Then it was that I realized the terrible dimensions of Sherre's appetite for work. He grew still leaner from this avidity—work and workers sufficed, the only thing that had not grown proportionately was the organizer himself. Eduard Nikolayevich cut down on his sleep, increased his stride, cancelled from his daily schedule certain unnecessary items such as breakfast, dinner, and supper—and even then had not time for everything he wanted to do.

Sherre aspired to accomplish in six weeks on our hundred hectares as much work as it had taken six years to do in the old place. He would send big detachments to weed the fields, to pluck up almost unnoticeable blades of grass, ploughed under without a tremor crops which failed to come up to his standards, planting in their stead

late crops of a special sort. Absolutely straight strips of earth, freed from weeds, and enriched with the droppings of the "King of Andalusia" and all sorts of porcine princesses, radiated into the fields. In the central plot, next to the road across the fields, Sherre made a melon bed, to satisfy my demand for pedagogical stimuli. The Commanders' Council regarded this as an extremely useful measure, and Lapot immediately began to draw up a list of deserving veterans, with a view to forming a special melon-bed detachment from these elements.

Despite the enormous burden of work on Sherre's shoulders, it was found possible to form a mixed detachment to clean the pond. Karabanov was made commander of the detachment. Forty naked lads, with whatever apologies for shorts Denis Kudlaty could find them, began draining off the water. Many interesting objects were found on the bottom—rifles, sawn off guns, revolvers.

It was not hard to remove the firearms from the mud, but to remove the mud itself proved no easy matter. The pond was quite a big one, and there seemed no end to removing mud in pails and on stretchers. It was only after four horses had been roped into the work, and harnessed to a wooden paddle specially invented for the purpose, that the mud began to show appreciable signs of abatement.

Karabanov's "special second mixed detachment" at work was a spectacle of rare beauty. The lads, smeared with mud from head to foot, strongly resembled blackamoors; it was hard to tell them apart, and, massed together, they looked as if they had come from some unknown, distant land. By the third day of their labours we were privileged to behold a sight which must have been unique in our latitudes—the boys went out to work, their loins draped in modish skirts made from the leaves of acacia, the oak, and other exotic growths. Necks, hands, and feet were further adorned with wire ornaments, strips of sheet iron and tin. Many even managed to make themselves nose-rings of crossed twigs, and earrings from nuts, bolts and small nails.

The blackamoors, of course, knew neither the Russian nor the Ukrainian language, and could only communicate with one another in some native dialect unknown to the

rest of us, distinguished by shrillness and the prevalence of guttural sounds quite unfamiliar to a European son. To our astonishment, not only did the members of the special second mixed understand one another, but they were extremely garrulous, and all day the vast hollow of the pond was filled with an intolerable hubbub. The blackamoors, up to their waists in mud and screaming at the top of their voices, would back Dragonfly or Hawk up to the clumsy paddle in the very middle of the ooze.

Karabanov, black and shining like all the rest, his shock of hair plastered into a hideous forelock, the enormous whites of his eyes rolling, would yell, showing his terrible teeth:

"Car-am-ba!"

Dozens of equally savage whites of eyes were fixed on the place to which Karabanov's exotically braceleted hand pointed, their owners nodding and standing by.

"Heave-ho!" yelled Karabanov.

The savages would fling themselves violently on the paddle in a wild, dense crowd, urging Dragonfly on with cries and efforts as he dragged a whole ton of thick, heavy ooze to the shore.

This ethnographical excitement reached its peak towards the evening, when the whole colony rested on the slopes of our hill, and the barelegged lads awaited in ecstasy the delicious moment when Karabanov would roar out: "Cut their throats!" and the blackamoors, with ferocious countenances, threw themselves bloodthirstily upon the "Whites." The latter would make for the yard in their horror, terrified faces looking out through doors and cracks. But the blacks never caught up with the "Whites," and there was no cannibalism after all, for, though the savages might know no Russian they nevertheless thoroughly understood that home arrest would be the consequence of bringing dirt into the house.

Once, and once only, the savages had the luck to make a real impression on the white population in the environs of Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine.

One evening, after a warm, rainless day, a thunder cloud appeared on the horizon from the west. This cloud, unfurling a menacing grey mane, rapidly spread across the sky, uttered a roar, and proceeded to attack our hill,

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The special second mixed received it with rapture, the bottom of the pond resounded with triumphant shouts. The cloud thundered upon Kuryazh with its whole ponderous battery of explosions, and suddenly, no longer able to support itself on the heavenly seesaw, emptied itself upon us in a smoking whirlwind of violent rage, rain, thunder and lightning. The special second mixed responded to this with earsplitting shrieks, performing a frenzied dance in the very heart of chaos.

But just at this agreeable moment the stern, anxious Sinenky, outlined on the slope in a net of rain, sounded the strident notes of the alarm. The savages stopped their dancing, and suddenly remembered their Russian.

"What are you puffing away for? Eh? Where? Here?"

Sinenky pointed with his bugle towards Podvorky, whither colonists were already pouring out of the yard, and making for the other side of the pond. About a hundred metres from the shore a hut was blazing like a bonfire, and a sort of procession was solemnly crawling around it. The forty blackamoors, led by their chieftain, rushed to the burning hut. About a score of terrified women and old men were trying to stave off the colonists already on the spot, with a hastily raised barrier of icons, and a bearded old fellow was crying:

"What business is it of yours? The Lord set fire to it, the Lord will put it out."

But looking round, the owner of the beard, together with the rest of the faithful, could not but realize that, not only had the Lord not the slightest intention of acting as fireman, but the decisive role had been given over, with the Lord's connivance, to the powers of evil. The crowd of blackamoors, the rags on their shaggy loins fluttering wildly, and their metal ornaments jingling, rushed up with savage cries. Their grimy faces, distorted with the sticks fastened to their noses, and crowned with the hideous forelocks, left not the slightest loophole for doubt—these beings could, of course, have no other intention but to fall upon the procession and drag it off to the infernal regions. The old men and women, uttering piercing shrieks, rushed into the streets in all directions, pressing the icons beneath their armpits. The boys threw themselves upon stables and cowshed, but it was too late—the

beasts had perished. Semyon, infuriated, battered a window in with the first log he could lay hold of, and clambered into the hut. A minute later a grey head and bearded countenance appeared in the window, and Semyon cried from within the hut:

"Take the old man out. . . ."

The boys took the old man out, and Semyon, fleeing from the flames, jumped out through another window on to the damp, green yard. One of the blackamoors rushed to the colony for a cart. The cloud had already travelled to the east, trailing a broad black streamer across the sky. Anton Bratchenko galloped up from the colony on Molodets.

"The cart'll be here in a minute. Where are the muzhiks? Why is there nobody here but the boys?"

We put the old man into the cart when it arrived, and trudged after it to the colony. From behind gates and wattle fences we were regarded by faces rigid with horror, anathemizing us with their looks alone.

The village was on the whole cool to us, though we sometimes caught rumours to the effect that the establishment of discipline in the colony was meeting with approval there.

On Saturdays and Sundays our yard would be thronged with the faithful. It was mostly only the old people who went into the church itself, the younger ones usually preferring to stroll round its walls. Our mixed patrol detachment soon put a stop to this form of communion—was it with the gods or with us, anyhow? Patrols wearing blue armlets were formed for the duration of divine service, and these presented the faithful with the alternative:

"Either go into the church, or get out of the yard. This isn't a promenade."

The majority chose to leave the yard. We did not go in for an antireligious campaign. On the contrary, there were even certain contacts between the representatives of the idealist outlook and those of the materialist one.

The church council sometimes came to me for the solution of petty problems affecting our common frontier. And once I could not refrain from expressing some of my feelings to its members.

"Look here, gaffers! Why shouldn't you use the church beside that—er—wonder-working well, eh? It's all cleaned up there now, you'd be all right there!"

"Citizen Director!" said the elder. "How can we use it, seeing that it's not a church, but just a chapel? There's no altar there. . . . Are we in your way here?"

"I need the yard. We haven't got room to turn round. And just look! We've got everything painted and white-washed, and put into order, and that broken-down dirty church of yours is an eyesore. If you gave it up I'd have it pulled down in a jiffy, and in a fortnight there'd be flower beds in its place."

The bearded elders smiled—was it that they liked my plan?

"Pulling things down is easy," they said. "It's building that's hard. Hee-hee! It was built three hundred years ago, plenty of hard-earned kopeks have been spent on it, and you say: 'I'll pull it down!' That means you think faith is dying out. Just you wait, you'll see it's not faith that's dying . . . the people know. . . ."

The church elder settled himself comfortably on the apostolic chair, his voice actually ringing as if the early days of Christianity had returned, but another old man checked his eloquence.

"Don't talk like that, Ivan Akimovich. The citizen director is only looking after his own business. But down there, where you want us to go, that's only a chapel. Yes, only a chapel. Besides, the place has been defiled, I tell you."

"You can sprinkle it with holy water," suggested Lapot.

The old man was taken aback.

"Holy water doesn't always work, Son," he said, scratching at his beard.

"You don't say so! Why not?"

"Not just anywhere, Son! It wouldn't be any good sprinkling you, would it now?"

"I don't suppose it would," admitted Lapot.

"There you are then! It wouldn't be any good! You've got to know where you can use holy water."

"And do the priests know?"

"Of course they do! They know, Son!"

"They know what's good for them," said Lapot, "which is more than you do! Yesterday there was a fire. But for the boys, an old man would have been burned to death. He'd have burned to a cinder."

"It would have been the Lord's will. Perhaps the Lord intended an old man like him to be burned."

"And the lads interfered. . . ."

The old man cleared his throat.

"You're too young to argue about such things, Son."

"Am I?"

"And that at the foot of the hill—that's a chapel, only it has no altar."

The old men took leave of us with Christian humility, and departed, but the next day they hung ropes and loops from the church walls, and workers with pails balanced themselves on them. Whether because they had been shamed by my remarks as to the disreputable state of the church walls, or because they wanted to show the vitality of faith, the church council had assigned four hundred rubles for the whitewashing of the church. Here were contacts!

The colonists were full of curiosity about the church, the younger ones giving me no peace till I allowed them to "go and see what they were doing in the church."

"But mind—no hooliganism!" Zhorka warned them. "We must act on their minds by persuasion and the reconstruction of life, and not by hooliganism."

The lads were offended.

"We're not hooligans, are we?"

"And you mustn't hurt anyone's feelings, you know. You must be very tactful. You know . . . like this."

Although Zhorka's admonitions were chiefly communicated by means of facial expression and by gesture, the lads knew what he meant.

"We understand. . . . It'll be all right."

But a week later the wrinkled old priest came to me, and whispered in my ear:

"A word to you, Citizen Director! I can't complain, of course, your boys don't do anything, but, you know . . . they corrupt the congregation, it's awkward, somehow. I know they try, God forbid that I should accuse them of

anything, but still it would be better if you told them not to go into the church."

"So they do behave badly!"

"No, no! God forbid! They don't behave badly, oh no! But you know, they come in shorts, in those caps of theirs . . . and some of them cross themselves, but they use their left hands, you know, and they don't do it properly. And they look round them, they don't know where to look, and they turn round, you know, sometimes sideways to the altar, sometimes with their back to it. It's interesting for them, of course, but still, it's a house of prayer, you know, and the boys, they don't know the meaning of prayer, and glory, and fear of God. They approach the altar modestly, of course, but they look at everything, and touch the icons, and keep looking at the throne, and one of them even stood in the holy gates, and looked at the people praying. It's awkward, you know."

I soothed the Little Father, promised that we would not get in his way any more, and announced at the colonists' meeting:

"Don't go into the church, lads, the priest has been complaining."

The boys were indignant.

"Why shouldn't we? We never did anything! Whenever anybody did go in they just looked round, and went away. He's a liar!"

"Why did you cross yourselves? What did you have to cross yourselves for? You don't believe in God, do you?"

"We were told not to give any offence. And how is one to know how to behave? They keep standing, standing there, and suddenly flop down on to their knees, and cross themselves. And so our kids thought they must do the same, so as not to give offence."

"Very well, then, don't go any more."

"All right, we won't . . . but how funnily they talk there! And standing up all the time—what's that for? And in that recess . . . that what d'you call it, altar . . . it's so clean, with carpets, and such a nice smell, and oh, how the priest carries on there . . . throwing his hands up. . . . You should see him!"

"Have you been right inside the altar gates?"

"I was going up to them just when he threw up his hands, and said something. I just stood there, I didn't do anything, and he said: 'Go away, go away, boy, get out of my way!' Well, so I went away, what did I care?"

By the middle of June the colony had been brought into perfect order. On the 10th the power station began to work, and the oil lamps were relegated to the lumber room. A little later, water began to flow in our pipes.

By this time the colonists had gone back to the dormitories. The bedsteads had been almost new-made in our smithy, and the new mattresses and pillows were ready, but we still could not afford blankets, and were loth to use the old rags. A supply of blankets would have cost almost ten thousand rubles. The Commanders' Council came back to this question again and again, never getting beyond the formula voiced by Lapot:

"If we buy blankets, we shan't be able to finish the hog-house. Pigs are more important than blankets!"

During the summer, blankets were only required for the sake of appearance, but everyone was filled with the desire to have the bedrooms looking nice for the Feast of the First Sheaf. The lack of blankets was the one blot on our perfect scheme of life.

And then we had a stroke of luck.

Khalabuda often came to the colony, inspecting dormitories and repair work, conversing in his deep voice with the boys, and profoundly flattered to learn that his rye was to be solemnly harvested. Khalabuda had grown exceedingly fond of the colonists.

"Our women are chattering away there," he would say. "*This* is wrong, and *that's* not how it should be! I wish someone would explain to me what it is they want! The lads work, they do their best, they're good lads, Komso-mols. I suppose it's you who upset the women."

But, while warmly responsive on all current questions, Khalabuda would always cool down when the subject of blankets was mooted. Lapot tried to approach Sidor Karpovich from all sorts of standpoints.

"Oh, dear!" Lapot would sigh. "Everybody has blankets except us. A good thing Sidor Karpovich's on our side. You see, he'll give us some!"

Khalabuda would turn away and mutter in dissatisfied tones:

"You're sharp guys, with your 'Sidor Karpovich'll give us. . . .'"

Another time Lapot would tune his plain to a minor key.

"So even Sidor Karpovich can't help us! Poor Gorky-ites!"

But the minor key did not help, either, though it obviously made Sidor Karpovich uncomfortable.

One evening he arrived in good spirits, praising the fields, the horizon, the hog-house, the pigs. In the dormitory he was pleased with the neatly-made beds, the crystal clearness of the newly-washed windows, the freshness of the floors, and the downy cosiness of the puffed-up pillows. The beds, it is true, were an eyesore with the dazzling nakedness of their sheets, but I was tired of worrying the old chap about blankets. Khalabuda himself was mournful, on leaving the dormitories.

"Confound it! They do need blankets! But how to get them?"

As Khalabuda and I went out into the yard almost all the four hundred colonists were drawn up. It was the hour of setting-up exercises. Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich, in accordance with the drill regulations of the colony, gave the command:

"Comrade Colonists! Attention! Salute!"

Hundreds of hands flashed into movement, and remained motionless over the rows of grave faces turned towards us. The drummers' squad hurled a brittle four-bar greeting at the horizon. Gorovich approached with his report, drawing himself up stiffly in front of Khalabuda.

"Comrade Chairman of the Children's Aid Committee! Three hundred and eighty-nine members of the Gorky Colony are in formation for setting-up exercises. Eleven missing—three on duty, six in the mixed patrol detachment, two on the sick list."

A veteran cavalryman, Pyotr Ivanovich stepped aside, revealing to the eyes of Sidor Karpovich the delightful spectacle of the Gorkyite ranks, spaced as for gymnastics, motionless in the salute. Sidor Karpovich, fingering his moustache in his emotion, grew unusually serious—more

so than was his wont, struck the ground with his knotted stick, and said loudly, in his bass voice:

"Good evening, lads!"

He blinked energetically when three hundred and eighty gay, youthful voices responded in ringing unison:

"Eve-ning, Comrade!"

Khalabuda, unable to restrain himself any longer, smiled, glanced aside, and half embarrassed, growled out:

"The little blighters! They've learned their stuff! I—I should like to say a word to them!"

"At ease!"

The colonists shifted their right feet, flung both arms behind their backs, swayed slightly, and smiled at Sidor Karpovich.

Once again Sidor Karpovich rapped with his stick on the ground, once again he fingered his moustache.

"I'm not fond of making speeches, you know, boys. Still, I'm going to speak to you now. You're fine fellows, I tell you straight, you're fine fellows! And you do everything our way, the workers' way, it all turns out splendidly, I tell you straight—if I had a son, I'd wish for him to be like you. And don't you take any notice of what the women say! I tell you straight—you stick to your line—I'm an old Bolshevik, and I'm an old worker, too, and I know! All this is done our way. If anyone says it isn't, just take no notice, and go straight ahead! Ahead—you understand? So there! And to show you I mean it, I tell you straight—I'll give you blankets, you shall have blankets to cover yourselves!"

The lads shattered the crystal of their ranks, and rushed towards us. Lapot leaped forward, waved his arms without waiting to straighten up, and cried:

"Hurrah for Sidor Karpovich!"

Gorovich and I hardly managed to step aside. Khalabuda was lifted by many hands, tossed into the air several times, and carried towards the club, his knotted stick towering over the heads of the crowd.

At the door of the club they set him down. Dishevelled, pale, excited, he began awkwardly setting his coat to rights, and had just clapped his hand in amazement on one of his pockets, when Taranets came up saying modestly:

"Here's your watch, and your purse, and here's your keys."

"Did they all fall out?" asked Khalabuda in astonishment.

"They didn't fall out," said Taranets. "I took charge of them, in *case* they fell out, and got lost . . . it does happen, you know. . . ."

Khalabuda took his valuables from Taranets's hand, and Taranets disappeared among the crowd.

"What chaps! Upon my word!"

Suddenly he burst out laughing.

"You little devils! What d'you think of that, now! Where is he—the one who 'took charge of them'?"

Thoroughly moved, he took his departure, and set off for town. After all this, I was utterly confounded when, the next day, that very Sidor Karpovich received me with cold aloofness in his own grandly-furnished office, and, scarcely addressing me, rummaged in the drawers of his desk, shuffled the leaves of his notebook, and blew his nose.

"We haven't got any blankets," he said. "We haven't got any."

"Give us the money, we'll buy them."

"And there isn't any money . . . there isn't any money. Besides, it isn't on your estimates."

"And what about yesterday?"

"Well, and what about it? That was just talk. How can I help it if there isn't anything?"

I recollected the environment in which Khalabuda moved, remembered Darwin, touched the peak of my cap with my fingers, and turned on my heels.

The news of Sidor Karpovich's defection was received with resentment in the colony. Even Galatenko was indignant.

"What a funny chap! Well, he can't come to the colony any more. And he said: 'I'll come when the melons are ripe, I'll help guard them.'"

The next day I handed in a complaint to the Arbitration Commission against the chairman of the Children's Aid Committee, taking my stand not on the legal, but on the political aspect of the question: it could not be suffered that a Bolshevik should not keep his word.

To our astonishment Lapot and I were summoned before the Arbitration Commission in two days. There we found Khalabuda standing before the judge's table with its red cloth, and trying to prove something. At his back, the representatives of the "environment," with their glasses and their creased necks, and their neat moustaches, huddled whispering among themselves. The chairman, who had hazel eyes and an imposing brow, and was dressed in a black peasant blouse, placed his hand with the fingers outstretched on a paper before him on the table.

"Wait a minute, Sidor!" he said. "Tell me frankly—did you promise them blankets?"

Khalabuda reddened, and flung out his arms.

"Well—there was some talk about it! What if I did?"

"In front of the colonists in formation?"

"That's true. The boys were drawn up in formation."

"Did they toss you?"

"They're just kids! They tossed me up. How's one to help that?"

"Pay up!"

"What?"

"Pay up, I say! Blankets must be given as resolved."

The judges smiled. Khalabuda turned towards his "environment," muttering something threatening.

We waited a few days, and then Zadorov went to Khalabuda to get blankets or money. Sidor Karpovich would not let Zadorov into his office, and his supply manager explained:

"I can't understand what possessed you to take us to law! Is that your way of doing things? Well, here you are, and here's the resolution of the Arbitration Commission. Here it lies—see it?"

"Well?"

"Well, and that's all! And don't come here any more, please! Perhaps we will decide to appeal. At the most we might put it into next year's budget. You think we can just go to the market and buy four hundred blankets! This is a reputable department...."

Zadorov left the town extremely upset. The whole evening was spent in heated, agitated discussion in the Commanders' Council, and at last it was decided to

appeal in writing to the head of the Ukrainian Government. But the next day a way out was found which was at once so simple and natural, so amusing and unexpected, that the whole colony laughed and danced with joy, and could hardly wait for the delightful moment when Khalabuda should arrive at the colony, and the colonists would talk to him themselves. This way out consisted in having a distraint placed at the bank on the current account of the Children's Aid Committee. Two days went by. Again I was summoned to the high-ceilinged office, where, seated in a roomy armchair was the same clean-shaven comrade who had once wanted to know why I didn't like forty-ruble teachers. There was a pleasurable glow on his cheeks as he watched Khalabuda, whose cheeks were also flushed, but not with pleasure, pacing the floor of the office.

I remained silent in the doorway, and the clean-shaven comrade, with difficulty restraining his laughter, beckoned me closer.

"Come here! What's this? How could you do it, Brother? This won't do! The distraint must be removed, or . . . look at him, they won't allow him to put his hand in his own pocket! He's come here to complain of you. He says: 'I don't want to work—the director of the Gorky Colony has treated me badly!'"

I said nothing, waiting to see what the clean-shaven comrade was leading up to.

"The distraint must be removed," he said seriously, "I never heard of such a distraint before!"

Then he suddenly lost control of himself, and rolled in his chair in paroxysms of laughter. Khalabuda thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked out of the window.

"Are you going to order the removal of the distraint?" I asked.

"It's like this, you see—I have no right to order it. D'you hear that, Sidor Karpovich, I have no right! I can tell him to remove the distraint, and he can say: 'I won't!' I see you have a cheque book in your pocket. Write out a cheque for the amount required—ten thousand, isn't it? And there you are. . . ."

Khalabuda came away from the window, took his hands out of his pockets, fingered his ginger moustache, and smiled:

"But aren't they sons-of-bitches!" he exclaimed. "Aren't they?" He came up to me, clapped me on the shoulder, and said:

"Good man! That's the way to treat us! We're just a pack of bureaucrats! It serves us right!"

The clean-shaven comrade once more burst out laughing, and was even forced to take out his handkerchief and wipe his eyes. Khalabuda, smiling, took out his cheque book, and made out a cheque.

The Feast of the First Sheaf was celebrated on the 5th of July. It was one of our oldest holidays—a red-letter day in our calendar—and the procedure to be observed had long been established. This time, however, it was dominated by the idea of exhibiting the colony, now that all "military" operations were over. This idea had taken possession of all the colonists, from first to last, so that the preparations for the day required no orders, but proceeded in a wave of ardour and firm resolve: everything must be first-rate. There were hardly any loose ends now—the beds were adorned with new red blankets, the pond shone with a mirror-like surface, and there were seven new terraces for the future orchard on the slopes of the hill. Everything had been seen to. Silanti was slaughtering hogs, Butsai's mixed detachment was hanging up garlands and slogans. Kostya Vetkovsky had carefully painted on the white background of the arch over the gateway:

"AND RAISE THE RED BANNER OF LABOUR
OVER THE LANDS OF THE WORLD"

while on the other side of the gate was a terse:

"VERY GOOD!"

On the second of the month the thirteenth mixed detachment, all in their best, set off under the command of Zhevily to distribute invitations in the town.

On the great day, the half-hectare of rye to be reaped was marked out with rows of red flags, the road leading to it decorated with flags and garlands. A small table was placed in the gateway for the use of the reception committee. Tables for six hundred were set out on the

top of the steep overhanging bank of the pond, and an obliging breeze set in motion the corners of the white tablecloths, the flowers in their vases, and the white coats of the dining-room commission.

Sinenky and Zaichenko, in red shorts and white shirts and broad-brimmed Caucasian hats, kept guard on Molodets and Mary on the road below, outside the gate. From the shoulders of each floated a white cape trimmed with real rabbit fur. Vanya Zaichenko had learned in one week all our nineteen signals, and Gorkovsky, commander of the bugler's brigade, had declared him worthy of the honour of being bugler on duty during the festivities. The lads wore their bugles slung across one shoulder by a satin ribbon.

At ten o'clock the first guests appeared on foot from the station of Ryzhov. These were representatives of the Kharkov Komsomol organization. The horsemen raised their bugles, letting the satin ribbons hang over their shoulders, settled themselves firmly in their stirrups, and sounded a welcome three times.

The holiday had begun. The guests were met at the gate by the reception committee in blue armlets, who pinned on to the visitors' breasts three ears of rye tied up in red ribbon, at the same time giving each a ticket on which was written in the most courteous terms the number of the detachment and the signature of the commander at whose table the guests were invited to dine.

The guests were conducted over the colony, while from the road below the signal of greeting was again sounded by our splendid horsemen.

The yard and premises of the colony began to fill with guests. Representatives of Kharkov factories, workers of the District Executive Committee and the Department of Public Education, people from neighbouring Village Soviets, newspaper correspondents, arrived on foot, while motorcars brought to our gate Dzhurinskaya, Yuryev, Klyamer, Bregel, Comrade Zoya, members of Party organizations, and our clean-shaven friend. Khalabuda too came in his Ford. He was met by the Commanders' Council, specially assembled for that purpose, immediately dragged out of his car, and tossed into the air. The clean-shaven one stood smiling from the other side of the car. When

Khalabuda had been set on his feet, the clean-shaven one asked:

"What have they pumped out of you this time?"

Khalabuda resented this.

"Did you think they wouldn't pump anything out of me? They always do!"

"You don't say! What was it?"

"They got a tractor.... I'm giving them a tractor—a Fordson. Go on then, toss away, you won't get anything else!"

Once more Khalabuda had to be tossed in the air, and then the boys took him off with them somewhere or other. The colony yard was soon as crowded as the main street of a country town. The colonists, with flowers in their buttonholes, strolled about the paths several abreast with the new arrivals, smiling at them with their crimson lips, bestowing upon them glances now shy, now radiant, pointing out this and that, leading them here and there.

At twelve o'clock Sinenky and Zaichenko rode into the yard, and, bending down from their saddles, held a whispered conference with Natasha Petrenko, after which, Sinenky, forcing his way among the groups of laughing guests and colonists, galloped toward the farmyard. A moment later the triumphant signal for a general meeting, a signal always played an octave higher than all others, resounded from the farmyard, and was at once picked up by Vanya Zaichenko. The colonists, abandoning their guests, rushed to the central square, and before the last notes of the bugle had reached Ryzhov, they were already drawn up in a single line, while Mitya Nisinov, flinging up his heels, and winning all hearts, sped to the left flank, a green flag in his hand. I began to feel my triumph in every nerve. The joyous, youthful line springing up suddenly in a blue and white ribbon next to the line of the flower bed challenged the imagination and commanded the respect of the assembled company, through their eyes, their tastes, and their habits. The faces of the visitors, up till now smilingly condescending, with the indulgence towards children which grown-ups consider so nice of them, suddenly became serious and attentive. Yuryev, who was standing behind me, said aloud:

"Fine, Anton Semyonovich! That's the way!"

The colonists straightened their ranks conscientiously, every now and then glancing towards me. Confident that everything was ready at all points I did not delay the next order:

"To the colours! Attention!"

From round the corner of the wall, strictly co-ordinating her steps to the rhythm of the salute, came Natasha, leading the banner brigade to the right flank.

I said a word or two to the colonists, giving them holiday greetings, and congratulating them on their victory.

"And now we will salute our best workers, the eighth mixed detachment of the first sheaf, under the command of Burun."

Once more the bugles sounded their greetings. The eighth mixed detachment entered the distant, wide-open gate of the farmyard. Oh, dear guests! I understand your emotion, I understand your fixed fascinated glances, because I myself, and by no means for the first time, am struck with admiration for the lofty, triumphant beauty of Eighth Mixed! It may be that I have had greater opportunities than you to see and to feel.

The detachment was led by Burun, Burun, the tried veteran, not for the first time leading the colony's working detachments onward. A gleaming, keen-bladed, combined scythe and rake, decorated with dog daisies, is held high above his herculean shoulders. Burun has a majestic beauty today, that I alone am capable of appreciating to the full, for I alone know that this is not merely a prominent figure in a tableau, not just a colonist who is good to look at, but first and foremost, an active commander, one who knows whom he is leading, and where he is leading them. In the stern, calm visage of Burun I can read his thoughts about the task before him: today, in the space of half an hour, he must reap and stack half a hectare of rye. The visitors do not see this, and there is something else that the visitors do not see: today's commander of the reapers is a medical student, and it is in this combination that the line of our Soviet style showed itself so clearly. Oh, yes, there's a whole lot the visitors don't see, a whole lot they *can't* see, if only from the fact

that they only looked at Burun. Four abreast behind Burun march the sixteen reapers in shirts just as white, bearing scythes just as flower-decked. Sixteen reapers! How easy to count them! And how many glorious names among them—Karabanov, Zadorov, Belukhin, Schneider, Georgievsky! Only the last row was composed of new Gorkytes: Voskoboinikov, Svatko, Perets, and Korotkov.

The reapers were followed by sixteen girls. The head of each is crowned with a wreath of flowers, and in the heart of each is a wreath woven of our beautiful Soviet days. These are the binders.

Just as the eighth mixed detachment was approaching us, two reaping machines rattled through the gate, drawn at a smart trot by two pairs of horses. The manes of the horses, the harness, and the blades of the reapers, are decked with flowers. There is a rider on the back of each horse on the offside. Anton Bratchenko himself is in the seat of the first machine, Gorkovsky in that of the second. After the reapers come the horsedrawn rakes, and after these the water barrel, driven by Galatenko, the laziest individual in the colony, whom the Commanders' Council, without turning a hair, had nevertheless awarded a place in Eighth Mixed. And now it can be seen how industriously, without a particle of laziness, Galatenko has decorated his barrel with flowers. It is no barrel, but a fragrant flower bed. Look—the very spokes of the wheels have been decked with flowers! And after Galatenko the rear is brought up by the red-cross ambulance cart, in which is seated Elena Mikhailovna, the old feldsher, with Smena—one has to be prepared for all emergencies during work!

Eighth Mixed came to a halt opposite the line of colonists. Lapot stepped out of the ranks, and addressed them.

“Eighth Mixed detachment! Because you have proved yourselves good Komsomols, good colonists, and good comrades, the colony has bestowed upon you the great reward of reaping the first sheaves. Do this properly, once more show all our younger colonists how to work, and how to live. The Commanders' Council congratulates you, and asks your commander, Comrade Burun, to take command over us all.”

Like all the speeches delivered on this day, nobody knew who had composed it. Such speeches were made year after year in the same words, drawn up once for all in the Commanders' Council. And for this very reason they are heard with special emotion, and all the colonists hold their breath when Burun comes up to me, presses my hand, and in his turn repeats the necessary and traditional words:

"Comrade Director, allow me to lead the Eighth Mixed detachment to work, and take these other boys with me to help us."

To this I give the answer expected of me:

"Comrade Burun, lead the Eighth Mixed detachment to work, and take these boys to help you."

From that moment Burun becomes the commander of the colony. He gives a few orders as to certain changes in formation, and in another minute the colony is on the march.

The reapers and harvesting machines took the lead behind the drummers and banner, and after them came the whole colony, followed by the visitors. These latter submitted to the general discipline, formed themselves into rows, and kept in step. Khalabuda marched beside me, and I heard him say to the clean-shaven comrade:

"Confound it! If it hadn't been for those beastly blankets I should be marching with them myself, with a scythe over my shoulder!"

I nodded to Silanti, who immediately flew to the farmyard. When we got to the half-hectare agreed upon, Burun stopped the colony, and, making a bold break with tradition, said to the colonists:

"A proposal has been received to appoint Sidor Karpovich Khalabuda fifth reaper in Zadorov's brigade, Eighth Mixed detachment. Any objections?"

The colonists laughed and applauded. Burun took the decorated scythe from Silanti, and handed it to Khalabuda. Sidor Karpovich, removing his jacket with brisk youthful movements, and flinging it on to the strip of grass bordering the field, brandished the scythe.

"Thank you!"

Khalabuda took his place as fifth reaper in Zadorov's brigade. Zadorov shook his finger at him:

"Mind you don't stick your scythe into the ground. It would be a disgrace to our brigade!"

"None of that!" said Khalabuda. "I'll show you the way to do it!"

The ranks of the colonists are lined up on one side of the field. The banner soars over the rye in the place where the first sheaf is to be bound. Burun and Natasha approach the banner, while Zoren, our youngest colonist, holds himself in readiness.

"Atten-tion!"

Burun begins reaping. With a few strokes of the scythe he lays at the feet of Natasha a heap of long-stemmed rye. Out of the first reapings Natasha has made herself a thong. She binds a sheaf with a few deft movements, two girls hang a coloured garland on it, and Natasha, pink from her exertions and success, passes the sheaf to Burun. Burun raises the sheaf on his shoulder and says to the serious snub-nosed Zoren, who threw back his head to catch Burun's every word:

"Take this sheaf from my hands, work and study, in order that when you grow up you may become a Komso-mol, and win the honour which I have won—the reaping of the first sheaf."

It was Zoren's moment of glory. He answered Burun in a ringing voice, like the song of a lark in the willows:

"Thank you, Grisha! I will study, and I will work. And when I grow up and become a Komsomol, I will try and win that honour—the honour of reaping the first sheaf, and giving it to the youngest colonist."

Zoren took the sheaf, and almost disappeared beneath it. But other little boys had already hastened up to him with flower-decked handbarrows, and Zoren laid his rich gift on the flowery bed.

To the thunder of the salute, the banner and the first sheaf were carried to the right flank.

Burun gave the command:

"Reapers and binders—to your places!"

The colonists ran to the places assigned for them beforehand, occupying all four sides of the field. Rising in his stirrups, Sinenky gave the signal for work. At this signal the seventeen reapers walked round the field, cutting a wide swathe for the reaping machines to follow.

I looked at my watch. Five minutes passed, and the reapers raised their scythes aloft. The binders bound up the last sheaves, and set them on one side. Then came the most critical moment of the whole process. Anton and Vitka, and the well-fed, well-rested horses were ready for it.

"Forward—trot!"

The reapers are brought up to the swathes cleared for them. In another second or two they are clicking their way through the rye, in a zigzag line. Burun followed their progress anxiously with ears and eyes. During the last few days there had been much discussion with Anton and Sherre, and much tinkering with the machines, which they had twice tried in the field. It would be a terrible disgrace if the horses wouldn't trot, if they had to be urged, if the reaper jammed and came to a standstill.

But Burun's face gradually cleared. The reapers advanced with a steady, mechanical sound, the horses fell of themselves into a free trot, not even slackening down at the turning, the boys sat motionless in their saddles. One round, and another. Entering upon the third round the reapers flew past us as gracefully as ever, and the grave Anton called out to Burun:

"All well, Comrade Commander!"

Burun turned to the ranks of the colonists, and raised his scythe:

"Atten-tion!"

The colonists dropped their hands, but everything within them was straining ahead, their muscles could hardly hold back their impetus.

"To the field—run!"

Burun lowered his scythe. Three hundred and fifty boys rushed into the field. Their hands and feet twinkled over the rows of fallen ears. Laughing and pushing by one another, leaping aside like rubber balls, they bound up the fallen rye, and ran after the reapers, flinging themselves in groups of three and four upon each heap of rye, claiming each heap for their own detachment.

"This one for the fifteenth detachment! This one for the ninth. . . ."

The visitors laughed till they cried, and Khalabuda, who had returned to us, looked sternly at Bregel.

"And you say. . . . Just look!"

Bregel smiled.

"All right, I'm looking. They're working splendidly, and gaily. But it's only work, after all!"

Khalabuda emitted an inarticulate sound, but said nothing more to Bregel. Instead he looked fiercely at the clean-chaven one, and said:

"What's the good of talking to her?"

Yuryev, happy and excited, pressed my hand and remarked to Dzhurinskaya:

"But really! Just think! You know it moves me, and I don't know why. Of course, it's a holiday today, of course it is, it's not a workday. But you know what it is—it's the mystery of toil. D'you know what I mean!"

The clean-chaven comrade looked attentively at Yuryev:

"The mystery of toil? Humph! Maybe! But why complicate things? I'll tell you what I like about it—they're happy, they're organized, and they know how to work. That's quite enough for a beginning, it is, really! What do you say, Comrade Bregel?"

Bregel had no time to think, for just then Sinenky, reining in Molodets in front of us, squeaked out:

"Burun's sent . . . they're gathering up the stacks. Everybody to the stacks!"

Standing round the banner beside the stacks, we sang the "Internationale." Then there were speeches, some good, some bad, but all equally sincere, and made by people who were sensitive and fine, citizens of the land of toilers, their hearts touched by the festival, the boys, the nearness of the sky, the chirping of the grasshoppers in the field.

Returning from the field everyone sat down to dinner together, with no thought of who was older, or who was more important. Today even Comrade Zoya joked and laughed.

The festivities were kept up for a long time. There were games of rounders, tag and touchlast. Khalabuda's eyes were bound, a length of braided cord put in his hand, after which he made unsuccessful efforts to catch a little fellow carrying a bell. And then the visitors were taken to bathe in the pond, after which the boys gave a brief entertainment in the central square. This began with a concerted declamation, voicing in halting rhythms what they wanted the next five years to bring them: a Town

Soviet of their own; a new workshop in their yard; a new orchard to blossom all over the hill; and . . . if possible—electrically-worked swing boats.

The "poem" ended with the expression of the hope that:

*Our muscles in five years' time will acquire
The strength of steel, not of a rubber tire.*

After a display of fireworks on the banks of the pond, we saw our guests to the station at Ryzhov. The motorcars had left earlier, and the clean-shaven comrade said to me, while taking leave:

"Well, Comrade Makarenko! Keep it up!"

"Very good—keep it up!" I saluted.

12

LIFE GOES ON

And again followed, in inexorable but joyous succession, days filled with anxieties, with those little triumphs, and little disasters which so often prevent us from noticing the great steps and great discoveries marking our life for a long time in advance. And, as before, during these days filled with toil, and still more in the quiet evenings, thoughts crystallized; the thoughts that flitted through our minds in the day were carefully summed up, and the elusive, fragile outlines of the future became tangible.

But the future became the present, and showed itself to be by no means so fragile—it could stand quite rough handling. Wasting no more time in mourning for lost opportunities, and profiting by our failures, we continued a life enriched by experience, making yet more mistakes and recovering from them again.

As before, a critical eye was kept on us, we were continually censured, informed that we ought not to make mistakes, that we ought to behave properly, that we ought to know theory, that we ought to do this, and not do that. . . .

A regular industry had sprung up in the colony. By hook or by crook we had organized a woodworking shop with excellent equipment—planing machines, joining lathes, mechanical saws—and we ourselves designed and constructed a lathe for more delicate operations. We en-

tered into agreements, received advance payments, and actually had the nerve to open a current account with the bank.

We even went in for making beehives. Far from being a simple matter they demanded the utmost precision, but we got the hang of this, too, and were soon turning out beehives by the hundred. We made furniture, ammunition boxes, and various other articles. We opened a metal-working shop, too, but came to grief before anything could be done.

The months passed. Beating off attacks from all sides, adapting ourselves, sometimes feigning submission, sometimes roaring and showing our teeth, sometimes threatening venomous stings, often snapping at anyone who happened to get in our way, we went on living and prospering.

We got richer in friends, too. Within the People's Commissariat for Education itself there were many who, like Dzhurinskaya and Yuryev, were endowed with realistic minds, an instinct for fair play, and a true desire to ponder over the details of our onerous task. But we had still greater numbers of friends among society at large—in Party and district organs, in the press, among the workers themselves. These were the friends who provided us with an atmosphere that we could breathe.

Cultural work struck deep roots among us. There were six classes in our school. Vassili Nikolayevich Persky, a remarkable person, arrived at the colony. This was a Don Quixote, embellished by centuries of technical inventions, literature and art. He was lean enough, and tall enough, to have been created by Cervantes himself, and this was a great help to him in "gingering up" and organizing club work. He was an indefatigable inventor and a dreamer, and I would not swear that the world as he conceived it was not populated with good and evil spirits. I would recommend all who are desirous of organizing club work to invite no one but Don Quixotes. Theirs is the capacity to see the future in everything, to create marvels from cardboard and paint; under their guidance boys begin to put out wall newspapers forty metres long, to distinguish a bomb carrier from a scout plane in a cardboard model, and to uphold the superiority of metal over wood with the last drop of blood in their veins. These Don Qui-

xotes provide club work with such essential factors as enthusiasm, restless talent, and the stuff of which creative artists are made. I will not dwell here upon all the feats performed by Persky, but will merely mention that he breathed new life into our evenings, filling them with shavings, glue, spirit lamps, the squealing of saws, the hum of propellers, group recitation and pantomime.

We began to spend a lot of money on books. The altars no longer sufficed for our book shelves, nor the reading room for our readers.

And there were other things.

First of these was—the band! Our colony was the first in the Ukraine, perhaps in the whole Union, to organize this excellent undertaking. It confirmed Comrade Zoya in her original conviction that I was an ex-colonel, but the Commanders' Council was pleased. True, the organization of a band in a colony is a great trial for the nerves, since, for four whole months it becomes impossible to find a spot on which performers on trombones, clarinets and cornets are not seated on chairs, tables and window-sills, rending the souls of all around with the most indescribably revolting sounds. But on the First of May we marched into town behind our own band. Oh, the keen emotions, the happy tears and astonished rapture among the Kharkov intellectuals, the old women, the newspaper workers, the street boys!

The next achievement was the cinema. This enabled us to come to grips with the shrine ensconced in the middle of our yard. The members of the church council might wring their hands, and hurl threats at us, but we timed our movie shows to coincide exactly with the chime for the evening service. This ancient summons had never before gathered such congregations. And how rapid was its action! Scarcely had the bell-ringer descended from the belfry and the Father entered the gate, when there were two to three hundred persons queuing up at the club door. While the Father was donning his vestments, the cinema mechanic adjusted the film in his apparatus, and just as the Father was chanting "Blessed is the Kingdom...", the mechanic started his show. Complete contact!

These contacts ended mournfully for Vera Berezovskaya. Vera belonged to those of my charges whose cost

price was very high in our industry, she didn't fit into any of our estimates!

For some time after her "kidney trouble" Vera kept quiet, and seemed to have forgotten herself in work. But the moment she became the least bit rosier and plumper Vera began to show off, with her tints, her shoulders, her eyes, her gait, and the tones of her voice. I was always catching her in dark corners beside a vague form. I noted how restless and shifty the silvery gleam in her eyes was becoming, the unpleasant insincerity of her voice when she defended herself against my imputations.

"What's the matter with you, Anton Semyonovich? Can't a person talk to anybody?"

In the matter of re-education no one gives more difficulty than a girl who has had "experience." However long a boy may have hung about the streets, however complex and illicit the adventures in which he may have taken part, however hard he may resist pedagogical interference, in a healthy collective he is sure—given the slightest spark of intellect—to turn out a real human being. The reason for this is that such a boy is in reality simply backward, and the extent to which he falls short of the norm can always be probed and made good. But a girl whose sexual life has begun early, almost from childhood, is not merely physically and spiritually backward, she is the victim of shock, profound, complex, and extremely painful. She becomes the target of knowing glances, timidly obscene, insolent, sympathetic, or lachrymose. All these glances are fraught with the imputation of crime. They prevent the girl from forgetting her grief, keeping alive in her the perpetual idea of her own inferiority. And side by side with this sense of inferiority exists a doltish, primitive pride. Other girls are green in comparison with herself, just kids, while she is a woman, she has already experienced that which is a mystery for the others, she has already enjoyed a special power over men, a power become familiar and easy. A will of steel would be required, in this intricate network of pain and pride, poverty and riches, tears in the night, and flirting in the day, to find one's line and stick to it, to build up fresh experience, new habits, new forms of caution and tact.

I was faced with all these difficulties in the person of Vera Berezovskaya. She caused me much grief after our move to Kuryazh, and I suspected that she was even then adding many a knot and twist to the thread of her own life. The utmost tact had to be expended in conversation with her. Touchy and capricious, she was always trying to run away from me to the hayloft or somewhere, to have a good cry. At the same time one kept stumbling upon her with constantly changing partners. The breakup of such partnerships presented no problem, owing to the deadly fear the male participators had of standing before the Commanders' Council, and replying to Lapot's invitation to:

"Stand at attention, and tell us all about it."

At last Vera realized that the colonists were not what she wanted, and sought a firmer base for her love affairs. The youthful telegraphist from Ryzhov, a pimply and morose individual, profoundly convinced that the yellow piping on his jacket was the highest expression to which civilization had as yet attained, had begun to show her attention. At first Vera used to meet him in the copse. The boys would come across them there, and protest, but we were sick of running after Vera. Lapot did the only thing there was to be done. He got Silvestrov the telegraphist in a lonely spot, and said:

"You're keeping Vera from going straight. Look out—we'll make you marry her!"

Turning his flabby, pimply face aside, the telegraphist muttered:

"Why should I?"

"Listen, Silvestrov, if you don't marry her, we'll bash your mug in for you—you know us! You won't hide from us behind your apparatus, and we'll find you even if you go to another town!"

Vera, scornfully ignoring all conventions, would fly to the trysting place at her first free moment. If she happened to meet me on the way she would blush, do something to her hair, and run away.

But at last she too was overtaken by fate. Late one evening she came into my office, flung herself familiarly on a chair, crossed her knees, blushed a fiery red, lowered her lids, but, her head held high, said loudly and defiantly:

"I have something to tell you."

"Go on!" I said, echoing her stiff tones.

"I've got to have an abortion."

"Have you?"

"Yes, I have. Be so kind as to give me a note for the hospital."

I looked at her in silence. She let her head droop.

"That's . . . all!" she said.

I maintained silence a moment longer. Vera tried to look at me from beneath her half-closed lids, and these glances told me that she was now quite shameless—the glances, the colour in her cheeks, her way of talking—all corroborated this.

"This time you're going to have your baby," I said coldly.

Vera looked at me obliquely, coquettishly, and tossed her head.

"No, I'm not!"

I made no reply, locked up the drawer of my desk, and put on my cap. She got up, and looked at me with the same awkward coyness.

"Come on! Time to go to bed!" I said.

"But . . . the note. I can't wait. You ought to understand."

We went through the dark room of the Commanders' Council, where we came to a stop.

"I tell you quite seriously, and I shan't alter my decision—no more operations! You shall have the baby."

"Oh!" cried Vera, and ran out, banging the door after her.

Three days later she met me at the gate, when I was returning late one evening from the village, and walked beside me, beginning to speak in a conciliatory kittenish voice:

"Anton Semyonovich, you keep joking, but it's no joking matter for me."

"What d'you want?"

"As if you didn't know! I want a note—why d'you pretend not to understand?"

I took her arm, and led her along the field path.

"Let's have a talk."

"There's nothing to talk about! What's the good of talking? Just give me the note!"

"Listen, Vera," I said. "I'm not pretending, and I'm not joking. Life's a serious thing, and it's wrong and dangerous to play at living. A very serious thing has happened in your life—you're fallen in love. Very well, then, marry the man."

"What the hell do I want with your 'man'! *Me* get married! I like that! And then you want me to be nursing babies! Just you give me a note! And who says I've fallen in love?"

"You haven't? So you were just fooling round?"

"What if I was? You can say anything you like, of course."

"And here's what I say: I'm not going to allow you to fool about. You've started living with a man, and now you're going to be a mother."

"Give me a note, I tell you!" shrieked Vera, now almost in tears. "Why are you mocking at me?"

"I'm not going to give you a note. If you go on asking, I'll place the matter before the Commanders' Council."

"Oh, Lord!" she shouted and, sinking on to the grassy edge of the field, fell to weeping, her shoulders heaving, and her breath coming in great gasps.

I stood over her in silence. Galatenko approached us from the melon bed, gazed long at Vera lying on the grassy edge, and asked in leisurely tones:

"I wondered what was squealing here. It's Vera crying! She generally laughs. And now she's crying."

Vera fell silent, rose from the grass, shook out her dress carefully, gave one last businesslike gulp, and turned towards the colony, swinging her arms and gazing up at the stars.

"Come in to the hut, Anton Semyonovich," said Galatenko. "I'll give you such a melon! It's a king-melon! Some of the boys are there."

Two months went by. Our life rolled on like a well-tended railway train—sometimes full steam ahead, more slowly when crossing a shaky bridge, brakes on going downhill, puffing and snorting when ascending. And together with our life that of Vera Berezovskaya's also rolled onwards; but she was a stowaway on our train.

It had become impossible to conceal from the colonists that she was pregnant—no doubt Vera had confided her

secret in her girl friends, and everyone knows how women-folk can keep a secret. I had an opportunity—not that I needed one—for appreciating the generosity of the colonists. Vera was neither teased nor persecuted. In the eyes of our lads, to be pregnant, or to bear a child, was neither a disgrace nor a misfortune. Not a single colonist ever said an insulting word to Vera, or flung her as much as a scornful glance. But their attitude to Silvestrov the telegraphist was another matter. It was obvious that all aspects of the question had been thoroughly discussed in the dormitories, wherever the mixed detachments happened to be working, in the clubrooms, threshing floor, workshops, and other gathering places, for Lapot told me about it as if it were quite a settled thing:

“We’re going to speak to Silvestrov in the Council to-day. You don’t object?”

“I don’t object, but perhaps Silvestrov will.”

“He’ll be brought. We’ll see what kind of Komsomol he is.”

That evening Silvestrov was brought in by Zhorka and Volokhov, and despite the tragedy of the situation, I could not restrain a smile when, the boys having placed him in the middle of the floor, Lapot gave a twist to the last screw.

“Atten-tion!”

Silvestrov went in mortal fear of the Commanders’ Council. Not only did he go into the middle of the room, not only did he stand at attention, he would have been ready, like the hero of a fairy tale, to undertake any feat, solve any riddle, if only thus he might hope to escape with a whole skin from this terrible institution. Things however turned out unexpectedly, in a fashion which set the Council itself trying to guess the solution of the riddle, for Silvestrov murmured from his central position:

“Comrade Colonists, what makes you think I’m such a bad lot, such a hooligan? You say—marry her! I’m quite ready to, but what can I do if she doesn’t want to?”

“She doesn’t want to?” cried Lapot, leaping to his feet. “Who told you so?”

“She told me so herself. Vera did!”

“Come on, then, let’s have her up before the Council. Zoren!”

"Very good!"

Zoren flew out of the door in a twinkling, and two minutes later reappeared in the office, nodded towards Lapot, and cocked his head in the direction of some distant sphere, at present inhabited by Vera.

"She won't! I told her, you know. But she only said: 'Get out!'"

Lapot swept his glance over the Council till it rested upon Fedorenko. Fedorenko rose ponderously from his place, saluted with careless familiarity, uttered a low, rich "Very good!" and moved towards the door. Zoren ducked under his arm in the doorway, and tumbled down the steps with a terrific racket. Silvestrov turned pale, frozen into immobility in there, in the middle of the floor, as he watched the colonists flay the fallen angel of love.

Hurrying after Fedorenko, I stopped him in the yard.

"Go back to the Council, I'll fetch Vera."

Fedorenko silently let me pass.

Vera, sitting on her bed, patiently awaiting torture and execution, was turning some big white buttons round and round in her hand. Zoren was standing in front of her like a pointer in sight of its prey, barking shrilly:

"Go! Vera! Go! Or Fedorenko. . . . Go! You'd better go!" his voice dropped to a whisper. "If you don't Fedorenko will carry you there in his arms."

Catching sight of me, Zoren disappeared, leaving nothing but a blue eddy of air in the place where he had been.

I sat down on Vera's bed, dismissing with a nod two or three girls who were hanging about.

"Don't you want to marry Silvestrov?"

"No."

"Then don't. You're quite right."

Still turning the buttons in her hands, Vera said, to the buttons, not to me:

"Everyone wants to make me get married. But what if I don't want to! You get me a permit for an operation!"

"No!"

"Get me one, I tell you! I know the law—if I want one you have no right to prevent me."

"It's too late now."

"Never mind if it is."

"It's too late. Not a single doctor would agree to do it."

"They would! I know! Only they call it a caesarean operation."

"D'you know what that is?"

"Of course! They'll cut me up, that's all."

"It's extremely dangerous. You might die."

"So what! I'd rather die than have a baby. I won't!"

I placed my hand over the buttons. She transferred her gaze to the pillow.

"Look here, Vera! The doctors have to obey the law, too. A caesarean operation can only be performed if a mother can't give birth to the baby."

"Well, I can't either!"

"Oh, yes you can! And you'll have your baby!"

She threw off my hand and rose from the bed, flinging the buttons violently on to the coverlet.

"I can't! I won't have a baby! You may as well know! I'll hang myself, or I'll drown myself, but I'm not going to have a baby!"

She flung herself on to the bed and fell to crying.

Zoren flew into the dormitory.

"Anton Semyonovich, Lapot wants to know whether they're to expect Vera or not. And what about Silvestrov?"

"Tell him Vera won't marry him."

"And Silvestrov?"

"Chuck him out!"

Zoren wagged an invisible tail, and flew out of the door like greased lightning.

What was I to do? How many thousands of years have people been inhabiting the earth, and still all this disorder in their love affairs! Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Desdemona, Onegin and Tatyana, Vera and Silvestrov. When will it be over? When will there be manometers, ampere-meters, voltameters and automatic rapid fire extinguishers to attach to the hearts of lovers? When will it cease to be necessary to stand over them and wonder: will he (or she) hang him-, herself, or will he (or she) not?

I went away in a fit of anger. The Council had already turned out the swain. I asked the girl commanders to stay behind so as to have a talk with them about Vera. Plump, rosy-cheeked Olya Lanova heard me out with grave friendliness.

"It's quite right," she said. "If we let her do that, she'll be quite lost."

Natasha Petrenko, watching Olya with calm wise eyes, said nothing.

"What's your opinion, Natasha?"

"Anton Semyonovich," she said. "If a person means to hang himself, you can't help it. There's no way of stopping it. The girls say, 'We'll watch her.' We will, of course, but she'll manage to slip through our fingers...."

We parted. The girls went to bed, and I to brood and wait for a tap on the window.

I spent several nights in this useful occupation. Sometimes a night would begin with a visit from Vera, who would arrive dishevelled, red-eyed, overcome with grief, and sit opposite me uttering a torrent of the most outrageous rubbish about her ruined life, my cruelty, and various cases of successful caesarean operations.

I availed myself of the opportunity of instructing Vera in certain elements of an essential philosophy of life, which she lacked to an incredible extent.

"You are suffering," I told her, "because you have been so greedy. You must have joy, entertainment, pleasure, amusements. You think life is one long holiday, with nothing to pay. A person just comes to the feast, gets treated, has a dance, and all for his own pleasure."

"And do you think people ought to be continually suffering?"

"I think life is not an eternal holiday. Holidays occur very seldom, the greater part of life consists in work, all sorts of human cares, and duties—that's the way all the workers live. And there is more joy and significance in such a life than in your holiday. There used to be people who didn't work but only enjoyed themselves and revelled in all sorts of pleasures. You know what we did to them—we just chucked them out."

"Yes," sobbed Vera. "If a person's a worker you think he must suffer all the time!"

"Why should he suffer? Work and a life of toil can also be a joy. Look—you'll have a son, you'll learn to love him, and you'll have a family and your son to look after. You'll be like everyone else, work, and sometimes rest, that's what life is. And when your son grows up,

you'll often remember me with gratitude for not allowing you to destroy him."

Vera began very, very slowly to hearken to my words, and survey her own future without terror and disgust. I mobilized all the feminine forces in the colony, and they surrounded Vera with special care, and expounded to her a still more special analysis of life. The Commanders' Council assigned Vera a separate room. Kudlaty headed a commission of three who carried to this room furniture, dishes, and all sorts of feminine trifles. Even the younger boys began to display an interest in all this, but of course they were incapable of shaking off their invariable frivolity, their far from serious outlook on life. This can be the only explanation for my catching Sinenky one day in a newly-made baby's cap.

"What's this? Why have you put that on?"

Sinenky tore the cap from his head, and heaved a sigh.

"Where did you get it?"

"It's ... Vera's baby's ... cap ... the girls made it...."

"A baby's cap? What d'you want it for?"

"I was passing by...."

"Well?"

"I was passing by, and it lay there."

"You were passing by the tailors' shop?"

Sinenky, understanding that no more words were needed, nodded silently, looking aside.

"The girls made it for a purpose, and you, you would tear it, soil it, throw it away! What d'you mean by it?"

But this accusation was too much for Sinenky's feeble strength.

"No, Anton Semyonovich, it was like this: I took it, and Natasha said: 'What'll you do next, I wonder?', and I said: 'I'll take it to Vera.' And she said: 'All right, take it!' I went to Vera's room, but she had gone to the dispensary. And you say I'd tear it...."

Another month passed, during which Vera made it up with us, and threw herself into maternal cares with as much passion as she had expended in demanding a caesarean operation. Once again Silvestrov appeared in the colony, and even the keen-witted Galatenko threw up his hands in astonishment.

"It beats me! Now they want to get married!"

Life went on and on. Our train became still livelier, and sped on, enveloping in its joyous fragrant smoke the wide fields of our cheerful Soviet days. Soviet-minded people regarded our life, and rejoiced. Visitors would come to us on Sundays—students, workers' excursions, pedagogues, journalists. The newspapers and magazines printed simple, friendly accounts of our life, illustrated by portraits of the boys and snapshots of the hog-house and the woodworking shop. Our guests would leave us, not unmoved by our modest lustre, pressing the hands of their new friends, replying to our invitations to come again, with salutes, and the words "very good!"

Foreigners were being brought to see us more and more frequently. Well-dressed gentlemen narrowed their eyes politely at our primitive prosperity, the ancient monastery domes, the boys' thin cotton overalls. Nor could we impress them with our cowsheds. But the lively boyish faces, the restrained business-like hum, the almost imperceptible irony of the glances directed at speckled hose and short jackets, at smoothly-groomed countenances and diminutive notebooks—these did seem to make an impression on our visitors.

They bombarded their interpreters with insidious questions—for some reason unable to believe that we had broken up the monastery wall, though there was obviously no wall any more. They asked permission to speak to the boys, and I gave it, only strictly stipulating that there should be no questions about the boys' pasts. This put them on their guard, and started them arguing. The interpreter, a trifle embarrassed, told me:

"They want to know why you conceal the past of your charges. If it was bad—all the more credit to you!"

But it was with entire satisfaction that the interpreter transmitted my reply:

"We don't want any credit. I only ask for the most ordinary delicacy. We don't pry into the past of our visitors."

The visitors blossomed out into smiles and nodded cordially.

"Yes, yes!"

Then they departed in their expensive motorcars, and our life went on as before.

In the autumn another group of colonists left for the *Rabfak*. In the winter we once more began patiently building up, brick by brick, in our classrooms, the austere edifice of educational culture.

And once more spring came round! And such an early spring! Everything was over in three days. The dry, speckled crust of ice still lies on the neat, firm paths. Someone is driving along the road, empty pails clattering merrily on his cart. The sky is blue, lofty, gay. The crimson flag flutters with loud claps in the warm spring breeze. The front door of the club is wide open, the vestibule with the strips of drugget so carefully laid over the washed floor seems cleaner than ever in the unaccustomed chill.

In the forcing-frames work had long been in full swing. The straw mats are folded and put away in the daytime, the glass roofs obliquely propped on supports. On the edges of the forcing frames boys and girls armed with pointed sticks for pricking off the seedlings, sat and chattered interminably. Zhenya Zhurbina who first saw the light in 1924, and is now for the first time roving at will over the earth's surface, peers into the vast depths of the forcing frames, glances fearfully towards the stable, where lives Molodets, and also prattles on the questions which interest her:

"And who will plough? The boys? And will Molodets plough? With the boys? And how do people plough?"

After Easter we caught rumours of a new house being built by the GPU on the other side of Kharkov, a house for a children's colony, not under the Department of Public Education, but under the GPU. The boys received this information as the symbol of a new era.

"Fancy building a new house! Quite a new one!"

In the middle of the summer a motorcar rolled up to the colony, and a man with crimson tabs said to me:

"If you have time, be so good as to come with me! We're just finishing a house for the Dzerzhinsky Commune. We should like you to look at it ... from the pedagogical point of view."

We went.

I was amazed. Was this for street waifs? A spacious, sunny palace! Parquet floors and painted ceilings!

Not in vain had I been dreaming for seven years! Not

in vain had I imagined the future palaces of pedagogy! With sensations of envy I expounded the "pedagogical point of view" to the Cheka-man, who confidently accepted it as the fruit of my pedagogical experience, and duly thanked me.

I returned home, devoured with envy. What fortunate man was destined to work in this colony? It's easy enough to build a palace, but there is something which is harder. I did not grieve long, however. Was not my collective better than any palace?

In September Vera gave birth to a son. Comrade Zoya came to the colony, closed the door of my office after her, and opened the vials of her wrath upon me.

"So your girls are having babies?"

"Why the plural? And why do you find it so alarming?"

"Alarming? Girls giving birth to babies!"

"Naturally to babies. What else could they give birth to?"

"Don't joke about it, Comrade!"

"I'm not joking."

"A statement will have to be drawn up immediately."

"The Registry Office has done all that is necessary."

"The Registry Office is one thing, and we're quite another...."

"No one has empowered you to draw up a birth certificate."

"It's not the birth ... it's something worse!"

"Worse than a birth? I thought there was nothing worse. Schopenhauer or someone says...."

"Comrade, drop that tone, please!"

"I don't intend to."

"You won't drop it? What does that mean?"

"Do you wish me to be serious? It means that I'm sick of everything—sick of everything, I tell you! Go away, you shan't draw up any statements!"

"Very well!"

"Your servant!"

She departed, but nothing came of her "very well."

Vera displayed unusual maternal gifts, and became a careful, affectionate, and rational parent. What more did I want? She was given work in our bookkeeper's office,

and whenever we met she showed me the most demonstrative affection.

The fields had long been harvested, the threshing was over, everything that had to be stored in the earth for the winter was stored, the workshops supplied with raw material, new colonists taken in.

The first snow came very early. The day before it had been warm, and in the night the snowflakes began noiselessly and cautiously circling above Kuryazh. Zhenya Zhurbina came out onto the porch the next morning, blinking at the white rectangle of the yard.

"Who's been salting the ground?" she asked, astonished. "Mama! It was the boys, I'm sure!"

13

"HELP THE POOR LITTLE BOY!"

The building of the Dzerzhinsky Commune was already completed. A handsome grey house had sprung up on the outskirts of a forest of young oaks, its twinkling façade looking towards Kharkov. In the house were lofty light dormitories, elegant halls, wide staircases, draperies, and portraits. Everything in the commune had been done with taste and foresight, not at all in the style of the pedagogical pundits.

Two halls were given up to workshops, and in the corner of one of them I saw, to my great astonishment, a cobblers' shop!

There were excellent lathes in the commune's wood-working shop. But here it could be felt that the organizers were not quite sure of themselves. The builders of the commune asked me and the Gorky Colony to get the new institution ready for the opening day. I assigned a brigade under Kirghizov for this work, and they threw themselves hammer and tongs into the new responsibility.

The Dzerzhinsky Commune was intended for not more than a hundred children, but it was to be a memorial to Felix Dzerzhinsky, and the Ukrainian Cheka-men had invested in this matter not merely their own money, but all their leisure hours, all the forces of their hearts and minds. There was only one thing they were not in a position to give the new commune, and this was pedagogical

theory, in which they were not well versed. But this by no means frightened them off pedagogical practice.

I felt the greatest curiosity to see how the Cheka comrades would cope with this difficult situation. They might, of course, have ignored theory, but would theory be ready to ignore them? In a matter so new and fundamental, would it not be as well to apply the latest discoveries of pedagogical science—self-government, for instance? Would the Cheka-men be ready to sacrifice their painted ceilings and beautiful furniture in the interests of pedagogical science? It very soon became evident that they were not willing to make any such sacrifices. The Cheka-man seated me in a deep armchair in his office, and said:

“This is what I want to ask you—we can’t have all this spoilt and broken up. Of course there must be a commune, and communes will be necessary for a long time to come. We know you have a disciplined collective. Give us fifty of your boys for a start, and then we’ll fill up with street boys. They’ll have their own executive body, and their own order, ready-made. D’you understand me?”

I understood him very well. I perfectly understood that this intelligent person had not the slightest conception of the science of pedagogics. To tell the truth at that moment I committed a crime. I concealed from Comrade B. that there was such a thing as a science of pedagogics, and let not a word slip as to “underlying self-government.” I said: “Very good!”, and tiptoed quietly away, glancing around me, smiling in my sleeve.

I was pleased that the Gorkyites had been entrusted with the building up of the new collective, but there were tragic overtones to the matter. How was I to give up the best I had? Did not the Gorky collective need every one of its best members?

The work of Kirghizov’s brigade was coming to an end. Furniture for the commune was being made in our workshops, and they had begun to make clothes for the future “communards” in the tailors’ shop. In order that these should fit, the fifty “Dzerzhinskyites” had to be chosen at once.

The matter was taken up with extreme seriousness in the Commanders’ Council.

"Good lads must be sent to the commune," said Lapot, "but not from the older ones. Let the older ones remain Gorkytes to the end. Anyhow they'll soon be having to go out into the world."

The commanders agreed with Lapot, but when we began going through the lists, loud arguments ensued. Everybody wanted members of someone else's detachment to be communards. We sat up till far into the night, at last fixing on a list of forty boys and ten girls. This list included both the Zhevelys, Gorkovsky, Vanya Zaichenko, Malikov, Odaryuk, Zoren, Nisinov, Sinenky, Sharovsky, Gardinov, Olya Lanova, Smena, Vaska Alexeyev, Mark Scheinhaus. Misha Ovcharenko was thrown in for the sole purpose of making the list more imposing. I went through it once more, and felt satisfied with it—good, steady lads, even if they were young.

The colonists assigned to the commune began to get themselves ready for the transfer. They had never seen their new home, and this made the parting with their comrades all the sadder. Some were even heard to say:

"Who knows how things will be there! The house may be all right, but everything depends on the people."

By the end of November everything was ready for the move. I began collecting a staff for the new commune. I sent them Kirghizov by way of leaven.

All this proceeded in an atmosphere of almost complete rupture with the "thinking pedagogical circles" in the then People's Commissariat for Education of the Ukraine. The attitude of these circles towards me had for some time been hostile, not to say contemptuous. The circles themselves were narrow enough, and the people in them easy enough to understand, and yet, for some reason, it would seem there was no hope for me.

At that time I possessed endless stores of patience, and was able, for months on end, to throw off any unpleasant impression which might have got in the way of my work. But there was a limit even to my patience. I actually acquired "nerves."

Not a day passed without somebody pointing out to me—in connection with matters trivial and important—how low I had fallen. I began to form suspicions of myself.

The nicest and pleasantest incidents suddenly became grounds for conflict. Could it be, after all, that I was entirely in the wrong?

A conference of "Friends of Children" was to be held at Kharkov, and the colony was to go and greet it. It was arranged that we were to be at the place of the conference at three sharp.

We had to march ten kilometres. We went at our leisure, I timing our progress by my watch, and stopping the column to let the boys rest, have a drink of water, and a look at the town. The colonists are fond of a march like this. People notice us in the streets, gather round us when we halt, ask us questions, make friends. The gay, smart colonists joke, rest, feel the beauty of their collective. This time, too, everything went off splendidly, and it was only the ultimate aim of our march that gave us any anxiety. The hands of my watch showed three sharp, as our column, with music and unfurled banner approached the place where the conference was to be held. But a group of infuriated intellectuals flew to meet us, yapping out:

"Why are you so early? Now the children will have to wait in the street."

I pointed to my watch.

"That's nothing!" I was told. "There are preparations to be made."

"Three o'clock was arranged upon."

"Oh, you always have some fad or other, Comrade!"

The colonists could not understand wherein their sin lay, why they should be regarded with scorn.

"And why did you bring the little ones?"

"The whole colony is here."

"How could any one drag little ones ten kilometres—it's unpardonable! You have no right to be so cruel just because you want to shine!"

"The little ones enjoyed the excursion. And after the exchange of greetings we're going to the circus. How could I have left them behind?"

"The circus! And when will you get home from the circus?"

"Very late!"

"Comrade—send the little ones back immediately!"

"The little ones"—Zaichenko, Malikov, Zoren, Sinen-

ky—turned pale in their places, looking towards me with eyes of desperate appeal.

“Let’s ask them,” I proposed.

“There’s nothing to ask—everything’s quite clear. Send them home immediately!”

“Excuse me, but I have no intention of obeying your order.”

“In that case I shall give the order myself.”

“Do!” I said, scarcely able to conceal a smile.

The speaker went right up to our left flank.

“Children! You little ones, over there—go straight home! You must be tired!”

No one was taken in by her kindly tones. Someone called out:

“Go home, indeed! Not a bit of it!”

“And you’re not to go to the circus. It’ll be too late.”

The “little ones” laughed. Zoren’s eyes danced mischievously.

“Look at her— isn’t she a sly one? Anton Semyonovich, just look— isn’t she sly?”

Vanya Zaichenko solemnly extended his hand towards the banner in a gesture all his own.

“That’s not the way to talk! You can’t talk to us like that when we’re in marching formation. Look—we’re standing under our colours—can’t you see?”

The lady looked commiseratingly at these hopelessly militarized children, and took her departure.

Such conflicts had, of course, no melancholy result for the matter in hand, but they created around me an intolerable sense of isolation, to which, however, one can accustom oneself. I gradually learned to meet each fresh case with morose readiness to bear it, to get over it somehow or other. I tried to keep out of arguments, and if I did occasionally growl back, it was from sheer politeness, upon my word it was! One must say something to one’s chiefs!

In October we had trouble in connection with Arkadi Uzhikov, leading to the creation of the ultimate, impassable gulf between myself and “them.”

The *Rabfak* students came to us for the weekend. We gave them one of the classrooms to sleep in, and spent the day in an excursion to the woods. While everybody was

amusing themselves in the woods, Uzhikov got into the room, and stole the brief-case in which the students had put the stipends they had just received.

"Forty thousand brothers" could not have loved the *Rabfak* students more than the colonists did. We were all overwhelmed with shame. For a short time the thief remained unidentified, and it was this which was the most important aspect of the case for me. A theft in a close-knit collective is appalling, not because property is lost, and somebody suffers thereby, and not even because the offender continues along the crooked path, but because it lowers the atmosphere of general well-being, destroys the mutual confidence between comrades, arouses the worst instincts—suspiciousness, anxiety about personal property, cautious, furtive egoism. If the perpetrator of a theft is not discovered, the collective begins to give at all its seams: whispers go about the dormitories, suspects are named in secret conversation, individuals are subjected to unnecessary ordeals—often those very individuals one would like to shield, because their characters are only beginning to develop in the right direction. Even if the thief is found in a few days, even after he has had his due reward, the mischief has been done, for this will not heal the wounds, annihilate the sense of injury, or restore peace to the collective. A single theft may contain the germs of endless enmity, bitterness, loneliness, and real misanthropy. Theft belongs to the innumerable phenomena in a collective not coming under any particular sphere of influence, and resulting rather from chemical reactions than from malice aforethought. Theft is only innocuous where there is no collective, and, therefore, no public opinion, so that no one but the robber and the robbed are involved. But theft in a collective exposes thoughts better concealed, destroying the essential delicacy and tolerance of the collective, and this is particularly ruinous in a society of "delinquents."

Uzhikov's guilt was discovered three days later. I immediately placed him in the office, with a sentry at the door to prevent unauthorized reprisals. The Commanders' Council ruled that the matter be tried before a Comrades' Court. We very seldom had recourse to trial, for the boys usually trusted the decisions of the Council im-

plicitly. Trial by his comrades boded little good for Uzhikov. The judges were elected at a general meeting, which agreed unanimously to five names—Kudlaty, Gorkovsky, Zaichenko, Stupitsyn, and Perets. Perets was chosen out of courtesy to the Kuryazhites, Stupitsyn was renowned for his justice, and the first three were an assurance that there would be no sentimentality or indulgence.

The trial opened in the evening, in a crowded hall. Bregel and Dzhurinskaya, who had come to the colony for the purpose, were present. Uzhikov sat on a bench by himself. All the last few days his behaviour had been marked by insolence, he had answered me and the colonists rudely, smirked and sniggered, provoking genuine disgust.

Arkadi had been over a year in the colony, during which time he had, beyond all manner of doubt, developed his worst propensities. True, he had become neater in appearance, held himself better, his nose no longer seemed to predominate over all his other features, and he had even learned to smile. But for all that, he was the old Arkadi Uzhikov, an individual without the faintest respect for anyone in the world, let alone for a collective, an individual living for nothing but the lusts of the hour.

Before he had come to us, Uzhikov had feared his father and the militia. In the colony nothing threatened him but the Commanders' Council, or the general meeting, and the significance of these institutions was entirely lost upon him. His sense of responsibility became still more blunted, and this was the explanation of his newly-acquired smile and insolent expression.

But now Uzhikov was pale. Evidently the Comrades' Court had made an impression on him.

The commander on duty called upon all present to rise for the entry of the judges. Kudlaty began cross-examining witnesses and plaintiffs. Their evidence was given in a spirit of stern disapprobation, tinged with sarcasm. Misha Ovcharenko spoke:

"Our boys, you know, are saying that Arkadi has brought disgrace on the colony. But I tell you, my friends, that this cannot be, he couldn't bring disgrace on the colony. He's no colonist—how could he be?—you don't

call him a human being, do you? Judge for yourselves—is that a human being? A dog or a cat would be better, upon my word, it would! But what's to be done with him? We can't just chuck him out, that wouldn't do him any good. I propose making a kennel for him, and teaching him to bark. Just don't feed him for three days—he'd learn! But he can't be allowed in the house."

This was an offensive and annihilating speech. Vanya Zaichenko, from the judge's bench, laughed heartily. Arkadi turned his eyes gravely upon Misha, blushed, and looked away.

Bregel asked permission to speak.

"Hadn't you better wait till the boys have had their say?"

But Bregel insisted, and Kudlaty submitted. Bregel stepped on to the platform, and delivered an impassioned speech. I still remember some parts of it:

"You are trying this boy for stealing. Everyone present says he's guilty, that he must be severely punished, some even demand expulsion. Of course he is guilty, but the rest of the colonists are still more guilty."

The colonists in the hall fell silent, craning their necks to look at the person who had asserted that they were to blame for Uzhikov's theft.

"He has been living over a year with you, and still he steals. This means that you have brought him up badly, that you have failed to find the proper approach to him, the comradely approach, that you have not taught him the right way to live. It has been said here that he is a bad worker, that he has stolen from his comrades before. All this only goes to prove that you have not given Arkadi the attention he required."

The keen eyes of the younger boys at last spied out the danger, and sent uneasy glances over the faces of their comrades. And it must be admitted that their anxiety was not unfounded, for at that moment the collective was faced with a grave menace. But Bregel did not notice the alarm of the meeting. She wound up with true pathos:

"To punish Arkadi would mean to take revenge on him, and you should not stoop to revenge. You ought to understand that Arkadi needs your help at this moment—he is in a critical position, you have all ranged your-

selves against him, just now somebody compared him with an animal. Some good lads must be charged to take Arkadi under their protection, and help him."

When Bregel descended from the platform, there was much movement in the hall, the boys talking eagerly and smiling at one another. Someone asked in grave, ringing tones:

"What was she talking about—eh?"

And another voice replied in perfectly restrained tones, but in words which were caustic enough:

"Children—why don't you help Uzhikov?"

There was laughter in the hall. Judge Vanya Zaichenko threw himself back in his chair, and banged with his feet against a drawer in the desk. Kudlaty reproved him sternly:

"What sort of a judge do you call yourself, Vanya?"

Uzhikov, who was sitting doubled up over his knees, suddenly emitted a spurt of laughter, but immediately recollected himself, and let his head sink still lower. Kudlaty seemed to be about to say something to him, but thought better of it, and, shaking his head, merely darted a piercing glance at Uzhikov.

Bregel appeared not to have noticed these petty incidents, she and Dzhurinskaya being engaged in animated conversation.

Kudlaty declared that the judges would retire for discussion. We knew that they would not take less than an hour over their legal bickerings and the composing of the sentence. I invited my visitors to the office.

Dzhurinskaya snuggled into the corner of the sofa, hiding behind Gulyaeva's shoulder, looking earnestly from one to another in her search for truth. Bregel was convinced that she had today showed us an example of "real educational work." I experienced a sensation of strange obduracy, not the obduracy springing from a sense of being in the right, not the obduracy of triumph, but the obduracy of vexation, born of a vague feeling of the hopelessness of my work.

"You don't agree with me, of course," said Bregel.

"Will you have some tea?" I answered.

These people were suffering from syllogistic hypertrophy: this remedy is good, that one is bad, hence the

first must always be applied. When would they learn dialectical logic? How were they to be shown that work like mine consists in an unbroken chain of operations, some taking a longer, some a shorter time, sometimes spread over years, and always bearing the stamp of *collision*, a collision in which the interests of the collective and those of individual members were all but inextricably entangled. How were they to be shown that during the seven years of my work in the colony I had never met with a single case that resembled another? How could it be explained to them that the collective should not be made to feel the strain of an unresolved situation, to experience society's helplessness, that in today's trial the object of educational work was not Uzhikov or the four hundred colonists as individuals, but the collective itself?

The monitor summoned us to the hall.

The colonists heard the sentence standing, in profound silence.

"SENTENCE

"Uzhikov, as an enemy of the toilers, and a thief, should be ignominiously expelled from the colony, but, taking into consideration the intervention on his behalf of the People's Commissariat for Education, the Comrades' Court resolves:

"1. To leave Uzhikov in the colony.

"2. To consider him a non-member of the colony for the duration of a month, to expel him from his detachment, not to assign him to any mixed detachment, to forbid all colonists to speak to him, help him, sit beside him at table, sleep in the same dormitory with him, play with him, or sit or walk with him.

"3. To consider him as under the orders of his former commander Dmitri Zhevely, and allow him to speak to his commander only about work, or, in case of sickness, to the doctor.

"4. Uzhikov to sleep in the dormitory passage, to eat at a separate table assigned by the Commanders' Council, and to work, should he desire to, by himself, according to the assignment of the commander.

"5. Anyone infringing this resolution to be immediately expelled from the colony, by order of the Commanders' Council.

"6. The sentence to come into force immediately after its confirmation by the Director of the colony."

The sentence was received by the meeting with applause.

"That's fine!" cried Kuzma Leshy, turning to us. "That's really helping! And you say—'help the poor little boy!' Won't you make him some master keys?"

He said all this in front of Bregel herself, without the slightest idea that he was being rude. Bregel looked at the shaggy Leshy disapprovingly, and said to me in official tones:

"Of course you're not going to confirm this resolution!"

"It must be confirmed," I answered.

In the empty room of the Commanders' Council Dzhurinskaya took me aside:

"I want to speak to you. What's this resolution? What do you think of it?"

"It's a good resolution," I said. "The boycott is, of course, a dangerous weapon, and cannot be recommended in general, but in this case it will be of use."

"You're quite certain?"

"Quite. You see, this Uzhikov is exceedingly unpopular in the colony—they despise him. The boycott will, first and foremost, create a new, legitimate form of relations for a whole month. If Uzhikov can stand it, they'll learn to respect him. And for Uzhikov it will be a worthy task."

"And if he can't stand it?"

"The boys will get rid of him."

"And you'll support them?"

"I will."

"But . . . it's impossible!"

"Anything else would be impossible. A collective is entitled to protect itself, isn't it?"

"At the expense of Uzhikov?"

"Uzhikov will find himself other society. And that'll be good for him, too."

Dzhurinskaya smiled mournfully.

"What sort of pedagogy is this?"

I did not answer her. Suddenly she found a definition for herself.

"Perhaps it's the pedagogy of conflict?"

"Perhaps."

In the office Bregel was preparing to go. Lapot came in with the sentence.

"Shall we confirm it, Anton Semyonovich?"

"Certainly. It's an excellent resolution."

"You'll drive the boy to suicide!" said Bregel.

"Who? Uzhikov?" Lapot was genuinely amazed. "To suicide? Oh! It wouldn't be a bad idea if he *were* to hang himself. But he won't—not *he*!"

"Horrors!" hissed the departing Bregel.

These women did not know Uzhikov, or the colony. Both the colony and Uzhikov himself embarked upon the boycott with enthusiasm. The colonists really did break off all communication with Arkadi, but there was not a trace of anger, offence or contempt left in their attitude to this wretched specimen of humanity. It was as if the sentence of the court had taken all this on its own shoulders. The colonists regarded Uzhikov from afar with great interest, and were continually discussing among themselves the whole proceeding, and Uzhikov's probable future. Many declared that the punishment imposed by the court was no good at all. This was also the opinion of Kostya Vetkovsky:

"D'you call that a punishment? Uzhikov goes about like a hero! Fancy—the whole colony is looking at him! He isn't worth it!"

Uzhikov really did go about like a hero. An expression of obvious vanity and pride showed itself on his face. He moved about amongst the colonists like a king, whom no one dares to question, or to address. In the dining room he sat at a small, separate table, as if he were seated on a throne.

But the fascinating sense of heroism soon wore off. In a few days Arkadi began to feel the prick of the crown of thorns placed on his head by the Comrades' Court. The colonists soon got used to the exceptional nature of his situation, but the isolation remained. Arkadi went

through weary days of utter loneliness, and these days succeeded one another monotonously, endless hours unadorned by the slightest warmth of human contacts. And at the same time, all around Uzhikov, the collective went on with its spirited life, laughter rang out, jokes were cracked, individual traits displayed themselves, the fires of friendship and sympathy sparkled now and then. Poor as Uzhikov may have been, still these had been accustomed joys for him.

A week later, Zhevely, his commander, said to me:

"Uzhikov has asked permission to speak to you."

"No," I said. "I will speak to him when he has honourably withstood his test. Tell him that."

And soon I noted joyfully that Arkadi's eyebrows, motionless till now, acquired a habit of forming a hardly appreciable, but nevertheless expressive, fold on his forehead. He began to gaze steadily at the others, he seemed to be thinking, and to be dreaming of something. Everyone could see the striking change in his attitude to work. For the most part Zhevely set him to cleaning the yard. Arkadi went to work with irreproachable punctuality, emptying dustbins and straightening the borders of flower beds. He often came out with his hoe in the evenings, too, picking up stray scraps of paper and cigarette butts, and tidying up the flower beds. One whole evening he sat in the classroom over a huge sheet of paper, which he stuck up in a prominent place the next morning. On it was written:

"Colonist! Respect your comrade's labour, do not throw paper about!"

"Just look," said Gorkovsky. "He considers himself our comrade!"

In the middle of Uzhikov's ordeal Comrade Zoya arrived at the colony. It was just dinner time. Zoya went straight to Uzhikov's table, and asked him in a troubled voice, in the midst of the silence which had immediately fallen upon the dining room:

"Are you Uzhikov? Tell me, how do you feel?"

Uzhikov stood up, looked gravely into Zoya's eyes, and said, quite courteously:

"I can't speak to you—the permission of the commander is needed."

Comrade Zoya rushed away to look for Mitka. Mitka appeared, lively, brisk, black-eyed.

"What's the matter?"

"Allow me to speak to Uzhikov."

"No," said Zhevely.

"What d'you mean by 'no'?"

"I won't allow you, and that's all."

Comrade Zoya came up to the office, and gave vent to a torrent of nonsense.

"This won't do!" she cried. "And if he has any complaints? Supposing he's on the edge of an abyss! This is torture!"

"There's nothing I can do, Comrade Zoya."

The next day Natasha Petrenko took the floor at the general meeting of the colonists.

"Boys! Let's forgive Arkadi! He is working well, and bearing his punishment honourably, as a colonist should. I propose an amnesty."

The general meeting emitted sounds of sympathy.

"Why not?"

"Uzhikov has pulled himself together splendidly."

"He has!"

"It's time! It's time!"

"Let's help the little boy!"

The commander's report was demanded.

"I tell you straight," said Zhevely. "He's become another person. Yesterday when that—you know who—that—"

"We know!"

"Well, when she came to him, and said: 'boy, boy!' what a brick he was!—he didn't budge! I myself used to think nothing would come of Uzhikov, but now I tell you—he's got, he's got—there's something in him . . . he's one of us. . . ."

Lapot grinned.

"All right, then—we'll amnesty him!"

"Vote!" shouted the colonists.

And there was Uzhikov, huddled behind the stove with his head hanging. Lapot surveyed the raised hands, and said cheerfully:

"Well, it seems to be unanimous. Arkadi—hi, there! Congratters! You're free!"

Uzhikov went to the platform, looked at the meeting, opened his mouth . . . and wept. There was much emotion in the hall. A voice cried:

"He'll tell us tomorrow!"

But Uzhikov wiped his eyes on his shirtsleeve, and, looking at him, I could see he was suffering. At last he brought out:

"Thank you, chaps! And girls . . . and Natasha . . . I . . . I understand it all, don't think I . . . please. . . ."

"Forget it!" said Lapot sternly.

Uzhikov bent his head submissively. Lapot brought the meeting to a close, and the boys rushed to Uzhikov on the platform. The sympathy they had today shown had been returned to them with interest.

I drew a breath of relief, like a doctor after a successful trepanning.

In December the Dzerzhinsky Commune was opened, an event which was celebrated with solemnity and warmth.

Not long before this day, which was marked by a fall of soft snowflakes, the first fifty members assigned to the commune, in new suits and fluffy overcoats, had said farewell to their comrades, and trudged through the town to their new home. Gathered in a group they seemed very small to us, rather like nice black chickens. They arrived at the commune covered with snowflakes, jolly and rosy. They ran about the commune as gaily as chickens, pecking desultorily at various organizational questions. In less than a quarter of an hour they had organized a Commanders' Council, and Third Mixed began putting up beds.

The Gorkyites marched under their colours, headed by the band, to the opening of the commune. Now they were the guests of their own comrades, who from this day were to bear the strange and solemn name of communards. The group of Cheka-men, all of them busy, important, distinguished, and honoured workers, did not seem a bit like a group of philanthropists amongst the four hundred ex-waifs gathered together. Warm friendly relations were immediately established between both groups, although the difference between the generations, and our particular respect, the respect in which Soviet children hold their elders, made itself vividly felt; at the same time these youngsters were no mere "wards,"

they had their own organization, their own rules, their own sphere of activities, all imbued with dignity, and the sense of responsibility and duty.

It came about quite naturally that the management of the commune should be entrusted to me, although nothing had been arranged or announced in this regard.

In comparison with the commune, the Gorky Colony appeared an extremely complicated and difficult undertaking. Having lost fifty of their comrades, the Gorkyites received fifty new members, townsfolk, who knew what was what. As before, though the newcomers rapidly assimilated the discipline of the colony, and its traditions, the real collective culture and a true collective physiognomy came into existence much more slowly. But we were used to all this.

Splendid vistas stretched ahead of us—we began to dream of our own *Rabfak*, of a new machine-shop building, of new openings in life. And one day we read in the papers that our own Gorky was coming to the Soviet Union.

14

REWARDS

That period—from December to July—was a wonderful time. In those days my barque tossed violently in the storm, but I had two collectives aboard, each in its own way splendid.

The Dzerzhinskyites rapidly brought their numbers up to almost a hundred and fifty. The new forces arrived in three groups of thirty—all street waifs of the first water, all picked specimens. The life of the communards was a clean, civilized life, and from the outside it seemed as if they were only to be envied. Plenty of people *did* feel envy, but these were by no means street waifs.

The Dzerzhinskyites made their public appearances in good, cloth suits, adorned with broad white shirt collars. Their brass band possessed instruments of the finest metal, and the trademark of a famous factory in Prague was stamped on their bugles. The communards were welcome guests at workers' and Cheka clubs, where they arrived rosy, friendly, and soberly elegant. Their collec-

tive always looked so cultured, that certain individuals, not overburdened with brains, were actually indignant:

"They've got together a nice set of children, dressed them up, and now they're showing them off. You try taking street waifs!"

But I had no time to worry about all this. I could hardly get the most necessary things done in the twenty-four hours. I would dash from one collective to another behind two horses, and the hour spent on the way presented itself to me as an unwelcome breach in the budget of my time. And although the ranks of our charges showed no signs of weakening, and we never departed from the shores of prosperity, the teaching staff was worked to death. It was then that I arrived at the theory which I am still propounding, paradoxical as it may seem: normal children, or children brought to a state of normality, are the most difficult to educate. Their natures are more subtle, their demands more complex, their culture is profounder, their relationships more varied. They demand of us not the wide sweep of our will, and not striking emotions, but the most intricate tactics.

Both colonists and communards had long ceased to be detached groups of individuals isolated from society. Each collective had formed complex social ties with other organizations—Komsomol, Pioneer, sport, military, and club. Innumerable roads and paths had been trodden between the colony and the town, along which travelled thoughts, ideas, and influences, as well as human beings.

Thanks to all this, our pedagogical work became tinged with new colouring. Discipline and the order of everyday life had long ceased to be my care alone. They had become the traditions of the collective, which could deal with them better than I could, and which watched over them not merely when cases of their infringement arose, not just because there was a row, or a fit of hysterics, but all the time, guided by what I would call the collective instinct.

Hard as things were for me, and vague as was the future, my life at that time was a happy one. There is indescribable happiness for an adult in a juvenile society which has grown up under his eyes and advances with him in implicit confidence. In such society even failure

cannot grieve, even vexation and pain seem to have their own lofty values.

The Gorky collective was closer to me than that of the communards. The ties of friendship were stronger and deeper there, the human beings in it had cost more to shape, the struggle had been more intense. And the Gorkytes needed me more, too. It had been the good fortune of the Dzerzhinskyites, from the very beginning, to have Cheka-men for their patrons, while the Gorkytes, with the exception of myself and our small group of teachers, had no one who was near to them. And so it never entered into my head that the day would come when I should leave the Gorkytes. I was altogether incapable of imagining such a contingency, it could only have presented itself as the greatest misfortune of my life.

Going back to the colony was like going home, and I even found rest in the general meetings of the colonists, in the Commanders' Council, and in the most complex collisions and difficult decisions. It was then that I formed one of my most enduring habits, and lost the ability to work in the midst of silence. I now only really felt comfortable when close beside me, right at my desk, I could hear the ring of youthful chatter; only then my thought took wings, and my imagination worked. For this in particular I am indebted to the Gorkytes.

But the Dzerzhinsky Commune placed more and more demands on my time and attention. And the cares were quite new ones, as were also the pedagogical prospects.

Particularly new and unexpected for me was the society of the Cheka-men. They were essentially a collective, which is more than can be said of the workers of the Department of Public Education at that time. And the more closely I observed this collective, the nearer to them my work brought me, the more vividly I became aware that here was something new. How it came about I do not know, but the Cheka collective was rich in those very qualities which I had been trying for eight years to instil into the collective of the colony. It was indeed! I suddenly found myself confronted with an image which I had up to now believed to exist in my mind alone, an image I had formed, with the aid of logic and literature,

out of all the events and the whole philosophy of the Revolution, but which I had never found anywhere else and had lost hope of ever finding.

My discovery was so precious and significant to me that the one thing I feared was disillusion. So I kept it a profound secret, not wishing that my relations with these people should become in the slightest degree artificial.

This discovery became the point of departure for my new pedagogical philosophy. What particularly delighted me was that the qualities of the Cheka collective explained very easily and simply much that had been obscure and indefinite in the abstract image that had so far guided me in my work. I now had opportunities of gaining insight into many once mysterious regions. Among the Cheka people high intellectual standards combined with education and culture had not assumed the outward expression which I had found so hateful among the former Russian intellectuals. I had known that it was bound to be so, but had been unable to imagine how these qualities would manifest themselves in the acts of living individuals. And now I had opportunities to study the speech, the mental processes, the new forms of intellectual emotion, the new disposition of tastes, the new nerve structures, and—above all—the new use to which ideals were being put. The pseudo-intellectual notoriously regards an ideal as an impertinent lodger, one who occupies the room of others, never pays, plays the informer, and worries everyone to death; everyone complains of the lodger, and tries to get as far away as is possible from the “ideal.” Now I saw something different: the ideal is no lodger, but a brilliant administrator, it respects its neighbour’s work, it sees to repairs and to heating, and everyone finds it a convenient and agreeable taskmaster. Moreover, I was interested in their attitude to principle. The Cheka people are devoted to principle, but with them principle is not, as it was with certain of my “friends,” a bandage over the eyes. The Cheka-men regard a principle as a gauge, which they use just as people use their watches, that is to say, without either the procrastinations of red tape, or undue impulsiveness. I saw, at last, the normal life of principle, and was finally confirmed in my conviction that my detes-

tation of the rigidity on matters of principle shown by the pseudo-intellectuals had been well founded. For it is no secret that when a certain type of intellectual does anything from principle, half an hour later he himself, and all around him, will be taking heart-drops.

I noted a great many other new features: all-pervading good humour, terseness of speech, a dislike of ready-made formulae, the inability to lounge on sofas or sprawl over a table, and, finally, a gay, but unlimited capacity for work, without martyred looks or hypocrisy, without a hint of the nauseating "blessed martyr" pose. At last I saw and felt for myself that precious substance for which I could find no better name than "social adhesive"—that feeling of common perspectives, that awareness of each other at any stage of the work, of all members of the collective, the perpetual consciousness of one high common goal, a consciousness which never degenerates into mere pedantry and garrulity. And this "social adhesive" was not a thing to be hastily purchased for five kopeks over the counter, just before a conference or assembly, it was not merely a form of polite smiling intercourse with the person next to one, it was real unity, the coordination of movement and work, of responsibility and help, it was the unity of tradition.

As the object of the special care of the Cheka-men, the Dzerzhinskyites were placed from the start in fortunate conditions—all they had to do was to accept what was done for them. I, too, no longer had to beat my head against a stone wall, in vain efforts to convince the authorities of the necessity and usefulness of pocket handkerchiefs and other essential trifles.

My satisfaction was of the highest order. I formulated it thus: now that I had become intimately acquainted with real Bolsheviks, I was finally convinced that my pedagogical scheme is the true Bolshevik scheme, that the type of human being which I had held up to myself as an ideal was no mere beautiful invention of my own, no dream, but a real, living fact, a fact I could appreciate to the full, since it had become part of my work.

And my work in the commune, no longer impeded by hysterical interference, was, though hard enough, work that the human mind could cope with.

The life of the communards turned out to be nothing like so prosperous and carefree as outsiders believed. The Cheka-men contributed a certain percentage of their salaries for the maintenance of the communards, but this suited neither ourselves nor them.

Three months had scarcely passed before the commune began to feel the pinch of real necessity. We delayed paying salaries, and even found difficulty in meeting the expenses of feeding our charges. The workshops showed but small returns, since they were, of course, training shops. True, the boys and I dragged the equipment of the cobblers' shop into a dark corner on one of our first days at the commune, and quietly smothered it with pillows, a murder which the Cheka-men tactfully ignored. But we could not hit upon anything to assure us an income in the other workshops either.

One day our chief sent for me, and, frowning and hesitating, placed a cheque on the table with the words:

"That's all."

I understood.

"How much have you given me?"

"Ten thousand. It's the last. It's been collected for a year in advance. There won't be any more—d'you understand? Make use of that—er—fellow—he's very energetic."

A few days later an individual who was not exactly the pedagogical type, was running about the commune. His name was Solomon Borisovich Kogan. Solomon Borisovich was no longer young, being nearly sixty, he had a weak heart, shortness of breath, "nerves", and chest spasms, and he suffered from obesity. But there was a demon of activity in this man, and he could do nothing to quiet it. Solomon Borisovich brought with him neither capital, nor materials, nor inventiveness, but forces not made use of under the old regime bubbled up indefatigably in his seedy old frame; ingenuity, optimism, doggedness, knowledge of men, and just a pinch of pardonable unscrupulousness, dwelt quaintly side-by-side with a feeling heart and devotion to an idea. Very likely all this was kept together, like the spokes of a wheel, by a rim of pride, for Solomon Borisovich was fond of saying:

"You don't know Kogan yet! When you know Kogan, then you can talk!"

He was right. We got to know Kogan, and we said—here is a remarkable man! We sorely needed his experience of life. True, this experience sometimes manifested itself in such forms that our blood ran cold, and we could hardly believe our eyes.

Solomon Borisovich brought a load of logs from town today.

"What's it for?"

"What for? And what about a ware house? I've accepted an order for furniture for the Building Institute, and it'll have to be stored somewhere."

"Why should it be stored? We'll make the furniture, and send it to the Building Institute."

"Hee-hee! D'you really think that's an institute? It's not an institute, it's pure make-believe. If it was really an institute I wouldn't have anything to do with it."

"And isn't it?"

"What's an institute? Let them call themselves what they like! The great thing is, they have money. And since they have money, of course they would like to have some furniture. And furniture requires a roof over its head. You know that yourself. And they can't make a roof, because the walls aren't up."

"We're not going to build any ware houses whatever you say!"

"That's what I told them. They think the Dzerzhinsky Commune is no great shakes. But it's a model institution. Is it going to spend time over some wretched ware houses? Is that what our time is for?"

"And what did they say?"

"They just say: 'Go ahead, build!' Well, since they seemed so anxious about it, I told them: 'it'll cost you twenty thousand.' But if you don't want to build, have it your own way! Why should we build ware houses, when it's an assembly shop that we need."

Two weeks later, Solomon Borisovich started the building of an assembly shop. Props were sunk, and the carpenters began putting up the walls.

"Solomon Borisovich, where did you get the money for the assembly shop?"

"Where? Didn't I tell you? They've transferred twenty thousand to our account!"

"Who has?"

"That institute I told you about."

"What for?"

"What *for*?" They want to have ware houses! Very well, then! Do I grudge them their ware houses?"

"But look here, Solomon Borisovich, you're building an assembly shop, not ware houses!"

Solomon Borisovich began to lose patience with me.

"I like that! And who said we didn't need ware houses? It was you, wasn't it?"

"We must return the money."

Solomon Borisovich wrinkled his brows fastidiously.

"Now don't be so unpractical! Have you ever heard of anyone returning cash? You've got strong nerves, perhaps you can afford it, but I'm a sick man, I can't play with my nerves like that. Return cash!"

"But they'll find out!"

"Anton Semyonovich! You're an intelligent man, aren't you? What is there for them to find out? Let them come tomorrow, if they like! They'll see people at work! And who's to say it's an assembly shop they're building?"

"And when the shop starts working?"

"Who's to prevent me from working? Can the Building Institute prevent me from working? And who's to say whether I'm to work in a ware house, or in the open air? Is there a law about it? There is no such law."

There were no limits to the logic of Solomon Borisovich. It was a battering-ram of immense force, overcoming all obstacles. Up to a point we ceased resisting, for all attempts at resistance were quashed at birth.

In the spring, as soon as our two horses began spending the night in the meadow, Vitya Gorkovsky asked me:

"What's Solomon Borisovich having built in the stables?"

"Built?"

"He's already begun. He's had a kind of boiler installed, and is making a chimney."

"Call him to me!"

Up comes Solomon Borisovich, as ever, grease-stained, perspiring, panting.

"What's that you're having made?"

"That? You know very well it's a foundry!"

"A foundry? But we decided to build a foundry behind the bathhouse."

"Why behind the bathhouse, when there's a building for it all ready?"

"Solomon Borisovich!"

"That's my name—what's the matter?"

"And the horses?" asked Gorkovsky.

"The horses can live out-of-doors, in the fresh air. You think it's only you who need fresh air, and horses can breathe any beastliness. Fine masters!"

We were, it must be owned, driven from our positions. But Vitka forged ahead again:

"And when winter comes?"

But Solomon Borisovich crushed him to smithereens.

"You seem very certain that there'll be winter!"

"Solomon Borisovich!" cried Vitka, aghast.

Solomon Borisovich retreated ever so little.

"And even if winter does come, what about it? Can't a stable be built in October? What does it matter to you? Or are you so anxious to spend two thousand rubles just now?"

We sighed mournfully, and submitted. Out of sheer compassion for us, Solomon Borisovich entered upon an explanation, the heads of which he checked off on his bent fingers:

"May, June, July, what d'you call it—August, September...."

Here he came to a momentary halt, only to proceed with still greater conviction:

"October.... Just think—six months! In six months' time two thousand rubles will have brought in another two thousand. And you want the stables to stand empty six months! We can't have frozen capital lying about!"

Solomon Borisovich had an aversion to frozen capital in its most innocent forms.

"I can't sleep," he said. "How can one sleep, when there's so much work to be done all the time? Every minute is equivalent to a financial operation. Who decided that people have to sleep such a lot!"

We marvelled: a short time ago we were so poor, and now Solomon Borisovich is overwhelmed with timber,

metal, lathes. Our working day is punctuated with the words: letter of advice, cheque, advance payment, invoice, ten thousand, twenty thousand. Solomon Borisovich listened with drowsy scorn to the speeches of the boys in the Commanders' Council on the subject of such pitiful sums as three hundred rubles for trousers.

"How can there be any question about it? The boys need trousers, and not trousers for three hundred—they're no good—they need a thousand rubles for them."

"And where's the money to come from?" asked the boys.

"You have hands and heads. Ask yourselves what your heads are for? For putting caps on? Nothing of the sort! Just spend another quarter of an hour in the shops, and I'll get you thousand rubles immediately, perhaps more, according to what you earn."

Solomon Borisovich filled his rickety workshops, which were suspiciously like ware houses, with old, cheap lathes and all manner of trash, bound together with string and incantations, and the communards plunged delightedly into this heap of rubbish. All sorts of things were made—club furniture, bedstead parts, oil cans, shorts, sport shirts, desks, chairs, plungers for fire extinguishers—and all in vast quantities, for in Solomon Borisovich's industry the division of labour reached its acme.

"You're not going to be a carpenter, are you? I know you're not—you're going to be a doctor. So you just turn out legs—why should you make a whole chair? I pay a kopek for two legs, you can earn fifty kopeks a day. You haven't got a wife, you haven't got children...."

The communards laughed in the Commanders' Council, and scolded Solomon Borisovich for advocating hack work, but we already had our industrial-financial plan—and that was a matter of supreme importance.

Wages for the communards were introduced as light-heartedly as if there had never been any such thing as pedagogics, and as if the devil and all his works simply did not exist. When the teachers endeavoured to draw Solomon Borisovich's attention to the pedagogical aspect of wages, Solomon Borisovich replied:

"It's our business to bring up wise people, I hope. And how can a man be wise if he works for nothing?"

"But do you think ideas are nothing, Solomon Borisovich?"

"When a man gets wages, so many ideas come to him that he doesn't know what to do with them. And when he hasn't got any money, he'll only have one idea—who can he borrow from. That's a fact."

Solomon Borisovich was an extremely useful leaven in our labour collective. We knew his logic was alien and absurd, but he dealt mortal blows so blithely and impetuously at a host of prejudices, that he evoked, if only out of sheer resistance, the demand for a different industrial style.

The Dzerzhinsky Commune became fully self-supporting with the utmost simplicity, and almost without an effort, so that we ourselves hardly realized what a victory it was. Not for nothing did Solomon Borisovich say:

"What? A hundred and fifty communards can't earn their dinner? Of course they can! They don't require champagne, do they? Or have they perhaps wives, who are fond of finery?"

The communards fulfilled their quarterly industrial-financial plans, one after another, with a broad combined effort. The Cheka-men were with us every day. Together with the communards, they entered into every trifle, every slightest shortcoming, Solomon Borisovich's mercantile tendencies, the low quality of output, the number of spoils. The industrial experience of the communards, becoming daily more complex, enabled them to cultivate a critical attitude towards Solomon Borisovich, who would exclaim indignantly:

"What's this? They know everything now! They want to teach me how things are done in the Kharkov Engine Works! What do they know about the Kharkov Engine Works?"

A slogan acknowledged by all began to shine ahead: "We must have a real factory!"

The factory began to be discussed more and more frequently. As one thousand after another was added to our current account, the general aspirations for our own factory were enriched by details which became ever more practicable. But all this belongs to a somewhat later period. The Dzerzhinskyites frequently met with the

Gorkyites. On their free days they visited one another in detachments, played football, volleyball, *gorodki*,* bathed together, skated, went for walks, and to the theatre.

The colony and the commune often joined forces for various purposes—Komsomol and Pioneer manoeuvres, sightseeing, celebrations, excursions. I was extremely fond of these days, they were the days of my real triumph. And well I knew that this triumph would be my last.

For such days general orders were issued for the colony and the commune, covering everything, from the clothes to be worn to the time and place of meeting. The Gorkyites and the communards had the same uniform—riding-breeches, gaiters, broad white collars, and skullcaps. I usually spent the night before such occasions at the colony, leaving the commune in the hands of Kirghizov. We would leave Kuryazh, allowing three hours for the journey, and entering the town from the slopes of Kholodnaya hill. Our meeting place was always the broad expanse of asphalt of the Tevelev Square, just in front of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee.

As always, the Gorky Colony looked splendid in the streets of the town. Our wide rows, six abreast, occupied almost the whole street, even overflowing on to the tram lines. As many as ten trams would line up behind us, their drivers scolding and ringing their bells without pause, but the youngsters of the left flank were well aware of their duties, and marched solemnly on, ever so slightly slowing down, sometimes casting sly glances at the pavements, but quietly ignoring the trams, their drivers, and their bells. Last of all came Pyotr Kravchenko, bearing a triangular flag. The people in the street looked at him with particular curiosity and warmth, the boys swarming around him so eagerly that the embarrassed Pyotr lowered his eyelids. His flag would flutter under the very nose of a tram driver, and Pyotr seemed to be floating in a dense atmosphere filled with the deafening clamour of tram bells.

At Rosa Luxemburg Square the columns at last abandoned the tram lines. The trams overtook us one by one, the passengers looking out of the windows, laughing and

* A kind of skittles, played with small logs, instead of balls.—*Tr.*

shaking their fingers at the boys, who neither losing their equilibrium nor falling out of step, would give their mischievous boyish smiles. Why shouldn't they smile? Can't one have a joke with the townsfolk, can't one play harmless tricks on them? They're our own folk, nice people—aristocrats and courtiers don't walk about our streets any more, pomaded officers no longer go by with ladies on their arms, shopkeepers no longer dart censorious looks at us. And we go about the town like its masters, not "asylum boys," but colonists, Gorkyites. Not for nothing does our red banner stream in the air in front of us, not for nothing do our bugles play the "Budyonny March."

Turning into Tevelev Square, we have scarcely begun the ascent of the slope, when the top of the Dzerzhinsky banner comes in sight. And there are the long rows of white collars, the grave, familiar faces, the swinging arms and music—Kirghizov's brigade. The Dzerzhinskyites greet us with the banner salute. Another moment, and our band, breaking off its march music, thunders out an answering greeting.

We stand in strict silence opposite each other for the brief time in which Kirghizov makes his report. And then, breaking ranks, the boys rush to their friends, shaking hands, laughing and joking. I remembered Faust. The wily Teuton might well envy me! He was out of luck, that doctor, he chose a bad epoch for himself, an unsuitable social structure!

If we met on the eve of a rest day, it would often happen that Mitka Zhevily would come to me, and suggest:

"Let's go to the Gorkyites! They're showing *Battleship Potemkin* this evening. And there's food enough."

On such occasions we waked Podvorky with the music of our combined bands, and the noise went on till late at night, in dining room, dormitories, and club, the older ones recalling the vicissitudes of earlier years, the younger ones listening enviously.

From the beginning of April the chief subject of our conversation was the coming of Gorky. Alexei Maximovich had written to us that he would come specially to Kharkov in July, to stay three days in the colony. Our correspondence with Alexei Maximovich had long become

regular. Though they had never set eyes on him, the colonists could feel his personality in their ranks, and rejoiced in it as children rejoice in the image of a mother. Only one who has been deprived of family life in childhood, who has had to go all through life without the slightest reserves of warmth to draw upon, is capable of understanding how cold the world can sometimes seem, only such a one can realize the value of care and affection from a great man, from a man with a rich, generous heart.

The Gorkyites did not know how to express tender emotions, for tenderness bore too high a value for them. I lived with them eight years, many of my charges grew very much attached to me, but not one of them during all this time was ever tender to me in the accepted sense of the word. I had to measure their feelings for me by tokens known to myself alone—the depth of a glance, the sudden colour mantling their cheeks, the attention following me from remote corners, a slight huskiness, joyous leaps after a chance encounter. And this enabled me to note the ineffable tenderness with which the lads spoke of Gorky, the unutterable joy which the brief intimation of his coming had given rise to.

The visit of Gorky to the colony was a high reward. It was not, in our own eyes, entirely merited, really it was not! And this high reward was to be ours at a time when the whole Soviet Union was raising its banners to welcome the great writer, when our tiny community could easily have been lost in the wave of broad public emotion.

But it was not lost, and this touched us, and imparted a high value to our life.

Our preparations for welcoming Gorky began the very day after his letter was received. Gorky had sent in advance a munificent gift, enabling us to heal the last of the gaping wounds from the old days of Kuryazh.

It was just then that I was called to account for my activities. I was required to tell all sorts of pedagogical pundits what my pedagogical faith consisted in, and what principles I professed. There were grounds and to spare for such an account.

I prepared for it cheerfully, though I expected neither mercy nor indulgence.

At last, in the high, spacious hall, I found myself faced by what seemed like a convocation of prophets and apostles. It was a regular conclave. Here, opinions were expressed courteously, wrapped in polite periods, redolent of cerebral convolutions, ancient tomes, and well-worn armchairs. But these prophets and apostles had neither white beards, venerable names, nor great discoveries to their credit. What right had they to wear haloes, and to bear the sacred scrolls in their hands? After all, they were but slippery customers, who had been behind the door when the good things of Soviet life were being distributed.

None of them was more active than Professor Chaikin, that very Professor Chaikin who had brought to my mind a few years ago a certain Chekhov story.

Concluding his speech, Chaikin left me with scarcely a rag of credit.

"Comrade Makarenko would like the process of education to be based upon the idea of duty. True, he adds to it the word 'proletarian,' but this cannot conceal from us, comrades, the inner essence of his idea. We would advise Comrade Makarenko to make a thorough study of the historical sources of the idea of duty. It is an idea underlying bourgeois relations, an idea of a profoundly mercantile nature. Soviet pedagogics aims at cultivating the free manifestation of creative forces, inclinations, and initiative, but by no means the bourgeois idea of duty.

"It is with profound grief and astonishment that we have heard today from the respected director of two model institutions an appeal for the cultivation of the sense of honour. We cannot but declare our protest against this appeal. Soviet public opinion which joins its voice to that of science, is also unable to reconcile itself to a return to a conception so vividly reminiscent of officers' privileges, uniforms, epaulettes.

"We cannot enter here into a discussion of all the speaker's statements regarding industry. It may be, from the point of view of material well-being, that this is a useful stimulus, but the science of pedagogics cannot include industry among the factors of pedagogical influence, still less approve the speaker's statements to the effect that 'the industrial-financial plan is the best edu-

cator.' Such theories are nothing but a vulgarization of the idea of labour education."

Many other spoke, and many maintained a critical silence. At last I lost my temper, and, in a moment of recklessness, poured oil on the flames.

"Perhaps you are right, and we shall never come to an understanding. I don't understand you! For example, you consider initiative a sort of inspiration, coming from God knows where, out of pure, empty idleness. I tell you for the third time that initiative comes when there is a task to be performed, responsibility for its fulfilment, responsibility for wasted time, and the demand of the collective. But you cannot understand me, and keep referring to some sterile initiative, quite isolated from work. According to you, initiative will come if you only stare long enough at your own navel."

Oh, how offended they were, how they yelled at me, how those apostles spluttered and blessed themselves!

And then, seeing that the fire was blazing merrily, that all Rubicons had been left far behind, that there was nothing to lose, since all was already lost, I said:

"You are not fit to judge of education or initiative, you don't know a thing about them!"

"And do you know what Lenin said about initiative?"

"I do."

"No, you don't!"

I drew out my notebook, and read out, very distinctly: " 'Initiative consists in retreating in good order, and maintaining strict discipline,' said Lenin at the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party, on the 27th of March, 1922."

The apostles were checked, but only for a moment, and then they cried:

"What has retreat to do with it?"

"I wanted to draw your attention to the relations between discipline and initiative. Moreover, I must retreat in good order myself."

The apostles blinked, then they turned to one another, whispering and rustling their papers. The conclave passed the unanimous resolution:

"The proposed system of educational process is a non-Soviet system."

There were many of my friends present, but they maintained silence. There was a group of Cheka-men. They followed the debate attentively, jotting down notes on writing-pads, and went away without awaiting the sentence.

We returned to the colony late at night. With me were the teachers, and several members of the Komsomol Bureau. Zhorka Volkov spluttered all the way home:

"How can they say such things! What do they think—there's no such thing as honour, there's no such thing as the honour of our colony? According to them there's no such thing!"

"Take no notice, Anton Semyonovich," said Lapot. "They're a pack of bores, that's what they are!"

"I'm not taking any notice," I consoled the boys.

But the question had already been decided.

Without a tremor, and never for a moment allowing the general tone to be lowered, I began winding up the collective. It was essential to get my friends out of it as quickly as possible. This was necessary both in order to save them from the ordeal of having to live under a new order, and to leave no centres of protest within the colony.

I gave in my resignation to Yuryev the very next day. After a thoughtful silence he extended his hand to me without a word. But just as I was going out of the room he seemed to recollect himself.

"Wait a minute! But Gorky's coming!"

"Surely you don't think I would allow anybody but myself to receive Gorky!"

"That's just it!"

He began pacing up and down the office, muttering:

"To hell! To hell with it all!"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm going to get the hell out of here!"

I left him in these good intentions. He overtook me in the corridor.

"Anton Semyonovich, old man, it's hard for you, isn't it?"

"There you go!" I laughed. "What's eating you? Oh, you intellectuals! All right, then, I will leave the colony on the day of Gorky's departure, I will hand over the

reins to Zhurbin, and you can do as you like....”
“Well....”

I told nobody in the colony of my resignation, and Yuryev promised to say nothing about it.

I rushed about to factories, patrons, and Cheka-men. Since the question of the older colonists leaving the colony had long been under discussion, no one in the colony was surprised. With the help of friends I had very little difficulty in getting places in the Kharkov factories, and rooms in town for the Gorkyites. Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Gulyaeva saw to their modest wardrobe, a matter in which they were by now experienced. There were two months till Gorky's visit, there was plenty of time.

Our seniors went out into the world, one after another. They parted with us in tears, but not in grief—we knew we were to meet again. We saw them off with guards of honour and music, under the unfurled Gorky banner. In this way Taranets, Volokhov, Gud, Leshy, Galatenko, Fedorenko, Koryto, the Volkov brothers, Lapot, Kudlaty, Stupitsyn, Soroka, and many others, left us.

Some, by agreement with Koval, we left in the colony on a salary, so as not to leave the colony leaderless. All who were preparing for the *Rabfak* I transferred to the Dzerzhinsky Commune till the autumn. The teaching staff was to remain in the colony for some time, to prevent anything in the nature of panic. Only Koval did not remain, but went back to the country without waiting for the end.

Among all the rewards showered upon me at this period, one was quite unexpected: the discovery that a living collective of four hundred persons is not easily destroyed. New members stepped instantly into the places of those who had left us—boys just as lively, witty and optimistic as their predecessors. The ranks of the colonists closed up, like the ranks of soldiers during battle. Not only did not the collective wish to die, it had not the slightest intention even to think of dying. It lived a full life, rolling rapidly ahead over its smooth rails, preparing solemnly and tenderly for the reception of Alexei Maximovich.

And now the days were splendid, happy days. Our weekdays were adorned as with flowers, by labour and smiles, by our clear prospects, by warm, friendly words.

Our cares hung over us like rainbows, our dreams, like searchlights, thrust themselves skywards.

And, as joyously confiding as ever, we advanced towards our holiday, the greatest holiday in our history.

At last this day arrived.

From the early morning there was a kind of encampment around the colony—townsfolk, motorcars, authorities, a veritable battalion of pressmen, photographers, movie-men. The buildings were adorned with flags and garlands, boys were drawn up at wide intervals, horsemen sent out on the Akhtyr highway, a guard of honour placed in the yard.

The tall Gorky stepped out of the car, cast a look around him, passed trembling fingers over his generous, working man's moustache, and smiled. He was obviously moved—this man with the face of a sage and the eyes of a friend.

"How d'you do! Are these your lads? Yes? Come on, then!"

The salute to the colours, the swish of the boys' hands, their glowing eyes, their open hearts—all these were laid at the feet of our guest like a carpet for his feet.

Gorky moved along the ranks. . . .

15

EPILOGUE

Seven years have passed. All this belongs to history now.

I still remember, to the very last detail, the day when the train carrying Gorky away had left. Our thoughts and emotions were still following the train, the eyes of the lads were still sparkling with the warmth of farewell, and now a simple little operation awaited me. The Gorkytes and Dzerzhinskyites were stretched all along the platform, the bugles of the two bands, and the tops of the banners were gleaming. The suburban train to Ryzhov was getting ready to leave from the opposite platform. Zhurbin came up to me:

"Can the Gorkytes get into the train?"

"Yes."

The colonists ran by me to the train, the brass instruments were carried past me, and there was our old silk

banner, embroidered in silk. In another minute bright groups of boys and girls appeared at every window in the train. They narrowed their eyes towards me, shouting:

"Anton Semyonovich, come into our carriage!"

"Aren't you coming? Are you going with the communards?"

"And tomorrow to us?"

I was strong in those days, and I smiled at the little chaps, and when Zhurbin came up to me I gave him an order in which it was said that, owing to my departure "on leave" the direction of the colony would be in his hands.

Zhurbin looked at the order blankly.

"Does it mean this is the end?"

"Yes," I said.

"But . . . how . . . ?" began Zhurbin, but the guard blew a deafening blast on his whistle, and Zhurbin, unable to finish his sentence, gave a helpless gesture, and walked away, his head averted from the carriage windows.

The suburban train started. The posies of boys floated past me, as on a holiday. They shouted "Good-bye!", jokingly raising their caps with two fingers. At the last window stood Korotkov. He saluted in smiling silence.

I went out into the station square. The Dzerzhinskyites were drawn up, waiting for me. I gave the command, and we crossed the town to the commune.

I never went to Kuryazh again.

* * *

Seven Soviet years have passed since then, and this is much longer than, say, seven tsarist years. During this period our country had traversed the glorious path of the First Five-Year Plan and almost finished the Second; during this time the world had learned to respect the eastern plains of Europe more than in three hundred years under the Romanovs. During this period our people developed new muscles, and our own intellectuals grew up.

My Gorkyites also grew up, and were scattered all over the Soviet Union, so that now I should find difficulty in gathering them together, even in my imagination. There's no getting hold of engineer Zadorov, who has become absorbed by some vast Turkmenistan construction work; and neither Vershnev, Medical Officer to the Special Far Eastern Army, nor Burun, a doctor in Yaroslavl, can be called for an interview. Even Nisinov and Zoren, those kids, even they have flown away from me, rustling their wings, but these wings are no longer the tender sprouts of my pedagogical sympathy, they are the steel wings of Soviet airplanes. Shelaputin, too, made no mistake when he vowed he would become a pilot. And Shurka Zhevily, not wishing to follow in the footsteps of his older brother, now an Arctic navigator, has also become a pilot.

Sometimes I would be asked by comrades paying a flying visit to the colony:

"They say there are many gifted individuals, you know, creatively inclined, among the street waifs. Tell me, have you any writers or artists?"

Of course there were writers among us, and artists, too, without such people no collective could exist—but for them, there would be no wall newspapers. But here I must sorrowfully admit that no writers or artists came from the Gorkyites, and this, not because they did not have enough talent, but for other reasons—life and its practical daily problems engulfed them.

Karabanov never became an agronomist. He graduated from an agronomical *Rabfak*, but did not go into an institute, saying earnestly to me:

"Never mind the corn growing! I can't live without the little chaps! What a lot of fine chaps there are still roaming about the world—oh, what a lot! If you've taken up this matter, Anton Semyonovich, I suppose I can, too."

And so Semyon Karabanov took the path of social-educational martyrdom, and has not deserted it to this day, although the lot which fell to Semyon was as painful as ever fell to martyr. He married his Chernigov girl, and they had a three-year-old son, black-eyed like his mother, passionate like his papa. And one fine day this son was

butchered by one of Semyon's own charges, sent to the home for "difficult children," an abnormal boy who had performed more than one such deed. Even after this Semyon never wavered nor abandoned our front: he neither murmured nor cursed anyone, only writing me a brief note in which there was more astonishment than grief.

Matvei Belukhin did not go in for higher education, and one day I got a letter from him:

"I did it purposely, Anton Semyonovich, without saying a word to you, forgive me, please, but what sort of an engineer should I make when at heart I'm a military man? I've got into a cavalry school. Of course I've behaved like a swine, you might say—leaving the *Rabfak*. It was wrong, I know. But please do write me a letter, because, you know, I do feel bad about it!"

There'll always be hope when people like Belukhin "feel bad." And we may hope to live long while the Soviet squadrons have commanders like Belukhin. I believed in this still more firmly when Matvei came to me with his new tab, tall, strong, a mature man, a "finished product."

Others, as well as Matvei, came, and it was always a shock to me to see that they were grown men: Osadchy, a technologist, Misha Ovcharenko, a chauffeur, Oleg Ognev, an irrigation worker beyond the Caspian Sea, Marusya Levchenko, a teacher, Soroka, a tram driver, Volokhov, an electrician, Koryto, a locksmith, Fedorenko, foreman at a machine and tractor station, Alyosha Volkov, Denis Kudlaty, and Zhorka Volkov, all Party workers; Mark Scheinhaus came too—still sensitive, but now equipped with a true Bolshevik character—and many, many others.

But during the seven years I lost sight of many. Anton has disappeared somewhere in a world of horses, from which he gives no sign of life, the vivacious, stormy-souled Lapot disappeared, as also did the good shoemaker Gud, and Taranets, the great constructor. I do not grieve about this, or reproach these lads with forgetful-

ness. Our life is too full, and one can't expect everyone to remember the whims of parents and pedagogues. Anyhow, it would be "technically" impossible to get them all back. How many girls and boys have passed through the Gorky Colony alone, not named in these pages, but just as lively, just as familiar, just as dear as the others. Seven years have passed since the winding-up of the Gorky collective, all years filled with the incessant filling up of the youthful ranks, with their struggle, their defeats, with their victories, and with the brilliance of familiar eyes, the play of familiar smiles.

The Dzerzhinsky collective is still living a full life, about which ten thousand "epics" could be written.

Books will be written about the collective in the land of the Soviets, because it is first and foremost a land of collectives. And these books will be wiser than the ones written by my friends, the Olympians, with their quaint definition of "The Collective":

"The collective is a group of mutually interacting individuals, jointly reacting to this or that irritant."

Only fifty Gorky lads arrived one snowy winter day at the beautiful rooms of the Dzerzhinsky Commune, but they brought with them a complex of discoveries, traditions and inventions, a veritable assortment of collective technique, the budding technique of man freed from masters. And on this healthy soil, surrounded by the care of the Cheka-men, supported daily by their energy, culture, and talent, the commune developed into a collective of shining beauty, of veritable labour prosperity, high socialist culture, with hardly a trace of the absurd problem of the "reformation of a human being?"

The seven years of life in the Dzerzhinsky Commune were also seven years of struggle, seven years of intense strain.

Solomon Borisovich's plywood workshops have long been forgotten, broken up, used for firewood. And Solomon Borisovich himself has been replaced by a score of engineers, many of whom deserve that their names should be recorded among the most honourable names in the Soviet Union.

By 1931 the communards had built their first factory—an electrical-instrument plant. In the light, lofty hall,

adorned with portraits and flowers, stood rows of the most cunning lathes. It is no longer shorts or bedstead details which emerge from the hands of the communards, but elaborate, graceful instruments, made up of a hundred parts, and "breathing higher mathematics."

And commune society was just as excited and stirred by higher mathematics, as long ago we had been stirred by beets, Simmenthal cows, the pig Vassili Vassilyevich, the horse Molodets.

When the great "Dzerzhinsky drill" came out of the assembly shop, and was placed on the testing table, Vaska Alexeyev, long grown up, turned on the current, and a score of heads, belonging to engineers, communards, and workers, bent anxiously to listen to its hum.

"It's sparking!" cried out the chief engineer Gorbunov in vexation.

"Sparking, damn it!" said Vaska.

Smiling to conceal their vexation, they bore the drill back to the shop, took it to pieces, checked it, applied to it all the rules of higher mathematics, rustling their blueprints over it for three whole days. The legs of compasses strode over the blueprints, sensitive "Kellenberger" grinding machines shaved the last superfluous hundredth of an inch from the parts, the sensitive fingers of the boys assembled the most delicate details, their sensitive souls awaiting with trepidation the next test.

Three days later the "Dzerzhinsky drill" was once more placed on the testing table, once again a score of heads bent over it, and once again chief engineer Gorbunov exclaimed mournfully:

"It's sparking!"

"Sparking, the beast!" echoed Vaska Alexeyev.

"The 'American' didn't spark," remembered Gorbunov enviously.

"It didn't spark," remembered Vaska, too.

"No, it didn't spark," confirmed yet another engineer.

"Of course it didn't spark!" cried all the boys, not knowing whom to be angry with: themselves, the lathes, the doubtful steel of Number Four, the girls who had worked on the armature, or engineer Gorbunov.

But, standing on tiptoe among the crowd of boys, and displaying to all his freckled countenance, Timka Odaryuk, blushing and looking down, volunteered:

"The American drill sparked just the same."

"How d'you know?"

"I remember how it sparked when it started. It's bound to spark, because of our ventilator."

No one believed Timka, and again the drill was carried back to the shop, again brains, lathes and nerves were set to work on it. The temperature of the collective rose appreciably, anxiety spread through dormitories, clubs, and classrooms.

A party of supporters sprang up round Odaryuk.

"Of course our chaps are nervous, because it's the first one. But the 'American' sparked still worse."

"It didn't!"

"It did!"

"It didn't!"

At last our nerves gave way. We sent to Moscow, and humbled ourselves before our elders and betters.

"Send us a 'Black and Decker'!"

They sent used one.

The "American" was brought to the commune, and placed on the testing table. Many more than a score of heads now bent over the table, and the anxiety of three hundred communards was over all. Vaska, quite pale, turned on the current, the engineers held their breath. And amidst the humming of the machine Odaryuk said loudly:

"You see, I told you. . . ."

A sigh of relief arose from the commune, and escaped to the heavens, and anxious looks gave way to triumphant smiles.

"Timka was right!"

We have long forgotten that stirring day, for it is long since we have been turning out fifty machines a day, and they have long ceased to spark; for although Timka had spoken the truth, there was another truth, too, and that was chief engineer Gorbunov's resolution, combined with higher mathematics.

"It mustn't spark!"

All this has been forgotten, because new cares and new matters came crowding up.

In 1932 it was said in the commune:

"We're going to make Leicas."

It was a Cheka-man who said it, a revolutionary and a worker, not an engineer, an optical mechanic, or a photo constructor. And other Cheka-men, revolutionaries and Bolsheviks, said:

"Let the communards make Leicas!"

This time the communards were perfectly calm.

"Leicas? Of course we'll make Leicas!"

But there were others, hundreds of them—engineers, optical mechanics, constructors—who replied:

"Leicas? Are you mad? Ha-ha!"

And a new struggle began, one of those highly complex Soviet operations of which there were so many at this time in our native land. This struggle involved all sorts of emotions, flights of fancy, flights on Soviet airplanes, blueprints, experiments and solemn rites performed in perfect silence in the laboratories; it involved also brick dust, and repeated attacks, and still more attacks, desperately determined strokes in the workshops from the ranks of the communards, who took all failures as a challenge. And all around sighs of doubt were again emitted, again eyes narrowed incredulously behind glasses:

"Leicas? The boys? Lens to hair-breadth precision! Ha-ha!"

But five hundred boys and girls had already plunged in the world of microns, into the finespun web of precision lathes, into the most delicate world of tolerance, spherical aberrations, and optical curves. Smiling, these boys and girls looked round at the Cheka-men.

"Never mind, kids! Don't you worry!" said the Cheka-men.

The fine gleaming FED* works rose up in the commune, surrounded by flowers, asphalt, fountains. And the other day the communards placed on the desk of the People's Commissar the ten thousandth FED camera, an immaculate, elegant apparatus.

Much has occurred, and much has been forgotten. The

* Dzerzhinsky Optical-Instrument Plan.—*Tr.*

primitive bravado, the thieves' lingo, and other survivals of the past have long been forgotten. Every spring the communard *Rabfak* sends scores of students to the higher education institutes, and they will soon graduate from these institutes as engineers, doctors, historians, geologists, airmen, shipbuilders, radio-operators, pedagogues, musicians, actors, singers. Every summer these new intellectuals come to visit their worker brothers—the turners, workers at capstan lathes, milling-machine operators, moulders—and then there is a grand march. The annual summer march has become a tradition. The communards have covered many thousands of kilometres, six abreast as before, the banner in front with the band. They have marched through the Volga district, the Crimea, the Caucasus, they have been to Moscow, to Odessa, and to the shores of the sea of Azov.

And every now and then in the commune, during the summer reunion, on days when life “sparked,” and days when the routine of the communards rolled peacefully on, a bullet-headed, clear-eyed lad would dart into a porchway, slant his bugle skywards, and give the brief signal for a Commanders' Council. And, just as they did of old, the commanders range themselves along the walls, with interested onlookers filling the doorways, and the little ones sitting on the floor. And as gravely and caustically as ever the chairman of the Commanders' Council tells the culprit of the day:

“Get out into the middle of the floor! Stand at attention, and tell us all about it!”

And just as of old, various incidents occur, temperaments clash, and the collective, buzzing like a hive of bees, throws itself into the place of danger. And the science of pedagogics remains as difficult and intricate as before.

And yet things *are* easier now! Long distant is my first Gorky day of ignominy and impotence, and I see it like a tiny picture glimpsed through the narrow lens of a stereoscope. Yes, things are easier now. In many spots of the Soviet Union there are solid centres of serious pedagogical work, and the Communist Party is dealing its final blow at the last breeding places of unfortunate, demoralized childhood.

And perhaps, very soon, people will stop writing “epics of education,” and write a simple businesslike book, called: *Methods of Communist Education*.

Kharkov, 1925-1935

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